THE LEFT'S
VOTING MACHINE

CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
LAUNCH OF THE LEFT'S POLITICAL MACHINE

If you live in a political "battleground" state, then your mailbox this fall may have been bombarded with a blizzard of communications from the Voter Participation Center (VPC) and its advocacy partner, the Center for Voter Information (CVI). The no-frills, low-budget mailings (often just a piece of white paper printed with black ink) were an effort to first get you to vote (VPC mailings) and then vote for Democrats (CVI mailings).

These organizations are but a small moving part within a vast new political machine being constructed by the wealthiest people and institutions of the American Left. Their audacious objective is to assume monopoly control of the policymaking powers of battleground state governments and—through this—permanently entrench Democratic control of Congress and the White House. The size and scope of the effort has no precedent in American history, let alone in the history of either major political party.

Indeed, it is so big it dwarfs the routine work of both political parties. The pages that follow report on what is known so far about the Left's national political machine.

In the example above, the Center for Voter Information sent a note to a young male voter in Michigan, telling him "we asked voters in your state what they would like to know most about Donald Trump and Joe Biden." Two of the three issues supposedly burning a hole in the brains of Michigan voters were the positions of the presidential contenders regarding "Free Community College" and "U.S. Citizenship for Military Veterans." The mailer portrayed Trump as opposed to both and Biden in favor. Signed by CVI president Tom Lopach, the short missive soothingly assures they have "done our best to represent each candidate in a fair and reasonable way."

Not mentioned is that Tom Lopach has a well-established work history supporting left-leaning causes. *Roll Call* reports that he began his career with Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-MA) and in 2015 was still helping the left-wing legend raise money for Senate Democrats. If you believe Tom Lopach

has done his "best" to represent a Republican president in a "fair and reasonable way," then you likely also believe in unicorns.

In the following pages you will find a list of dozens of organizations, such as the Center for Voter Information, that we have identified as working to create the Left's political machine. The list continues to grow. We discover more groups every week, likely because the Left continues to create more for us to find.

Our introductory report, "Colorado's Big Blue Political Machine," is a 2020 update of the disturbing story told in *The Blueprint: How Democrats Won Colorado and Why Republicans Everywhere Should Care*. The 2010 book describes the birth of the left-wing political machine in Colorado. In 2004, Colorado had a Republican governor, and Republicans had controlled one or both chambers of the legislature for decades. By November 2006 that had all been reversed: Democrats controlled everything.

The title of the book notwithstanding, "Democrats" really didn't do the heavy lifting in Colorado. Instead, it was four wealthy left-wing donors with a plan that later included some of the most powerful labor bosses and left-of-center political institutions in the state. Almost without meaning to, they constructed an intricate and extremely effective political machine. Frequently, over the last 14 years, this machine has held total control over the policymaking power in Colorado state government. At a minimum, it has prevented Republicans from coming anywhere close to reclaiming control.

Colorado is the model for what the Left seeks to accomplish in other states and nationally.

For example, one of the case studies in this report, "The Left's Plan to Flip North Carolina in 2020," describes the work of Blueprint NC. The name may or may not be a coincidental reference to the Colorado book title, but our report demonstrates it is part of a national alliance

with an identical objective: "crafting permanent left-wing infrastructure in battleground states."

The story is similar in another state case study in our report: "How the Left Plans to Flip Pennsylvania in 2020— Permanently." That report and some of the others we have included reference the work of the Democracy Alliance (DA) and its role in steering funding to the many moving parts of the Left's national machine.

The Colorado case study is partly the story of the evolution of the Colorado Democracy Alliance (CoDA) and its role as the political venture capital firm for left-wing Colorado donors seeking to collectively identify the most effective use for their dollars. The Democracy Alliance is a national effort to provide the same service for much wealthier individuals and institutions, such as multi-billionaire George Soros.

The Funders Committee for Civic Participation is another of the Left political machine's financial steering committees. It is profiled in our report "The Funders Committee for Civic Participation," which identifies the vast scope of the project:

> *The ranks of its 90-odd members include nearly every "dark money" funder on the Left as well as some of its biggest labor groups: Arabella Advisors, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, George Soros's Open Society Foundations, eBay co-founder Pierre Omidyar's Democracy Fund, the National Education Association, and the AFL-CIO.*

Combined, just a few of those left-wing funding powerhouses have a giving capacity that exceeds *$1 billion per year*.

What sort of projects are these big piles of money going toward?

Some voters, such as the elderly and disabled, require remote voting by mail for obvious reasons. But voting in person or by requested absentee ballot permits states to protect election integrity through processes that ensure the ballots and decisions belong to the actual voters. The effort to push most or all voters to remote voting by mail jeopardizes ballot security. A major project pursuing this change is profiled in our report titled "Unite America: The Nonprofit Network Behind 'Vote by Mail.'"

Locking in permanent or near-permanent control of Congress is the Left's primary objective in building its national political machine. To do that requires a major financial commitment to controlling the congressional redistricting process. The political boss behind this part of the machine's effort is former Obama Administration Attorney General Eric Holder, whose work is profiled in "Eric Holder's Plan to Gerrymander America."

One of Holder's major objectives is to remove the congressional redistricting process in battleground states from the people's elected representatives (i.e., state legislatures) and to hand that power over to unelected, supposedly "independent" commissions. Our report "The Myth of Nonpartisan Districts: An Experiment in Redistricting Reform" reveals that the supposedly nonpartisan commissions do a strikingly poor job of creating nonpartisan congressional maps, particularly in comparison to the lawmakers. To understand why this might be, read the disturbing story from our state case study for Michigan: "*Slay the Dragon*: Save Democracy by Eliminating Democracy."

If you or your loved ones live in a battleground state, you will be seeing much more of the Left's national political machine at work. Please use these reports and more that will be forthcoming from Capital Research Center to raise awareness about this unprecedented attempt to lock down one-party rule for the Left. ∎

Editor's note: This report was compiled just before the 2020 election and references the Left's attempt to influence the composition of state legislatures and in order to control the post-2020 Congressional redistricting process. The results of the 2020 election showed this particular project failed, despite a significant effort and expense. However, the information on this topic remains relevant because it illustrates the coordinated effort the Left-progressives are capable of and will continue to deploy during the Biden administration.

INSIDE THE LEFT'S VOTING MACHINE:
THE SECRET PLAN TO USE ELECTORAL "REFORMS" TO ENTRENCH LEFT-WING MAJORITIES

The Challenge We Aim to Fight

The Left's funders and activists have poured tens of millions into "helping" the Census count, and their work to "help" voters register and reach the polls is still more vast by another order of magnitude. And all that help was occurring years before the coronavirus appeared. Now the Left smells grand new opportunities to inject new voters (living and dead) into new election processes in hopes of creating a new America with permanent governing majorities tilted hard to the left.

Although supporters of America's traditional Constitutional regime and honest elections are years—and hundreds of millions of dollars—behind the Left, we believe that Capital Research Center can help the entire liberty movement combat some of the worst of these electoral "reforms" and scams. Capital Research Center's investigations that expose the Left and encourage conservatives to fight fire with fire.

Now we have focused our irrefutable research and weaponized it to counter the Left's frightening "coronavirus response," which amounts to an assault on the 2020 – and future – elections. In the pages that follow, we have mapped the world of left-wing voting "reform" schemes and exposed them, their funders, and their self-serving arguments to the American public.

Background

Left-wing activists understand the power of nonprofit advocacy groups as agents of social change. That helps explain why left-leaning groups outspend their free-market/conservative counterparts by about 4-1. To empower the Left, its donors and activists have quietly built a vast network of allied PACs, voter registration nonprofits, litigation organizations, and Census "get out the count" groups to win battleground states, which in turn will help the movement implement many of the socialist policies that have been touted in recent years—from the Green New Deal to Medicare-for-All to the union-backed PRO Act.
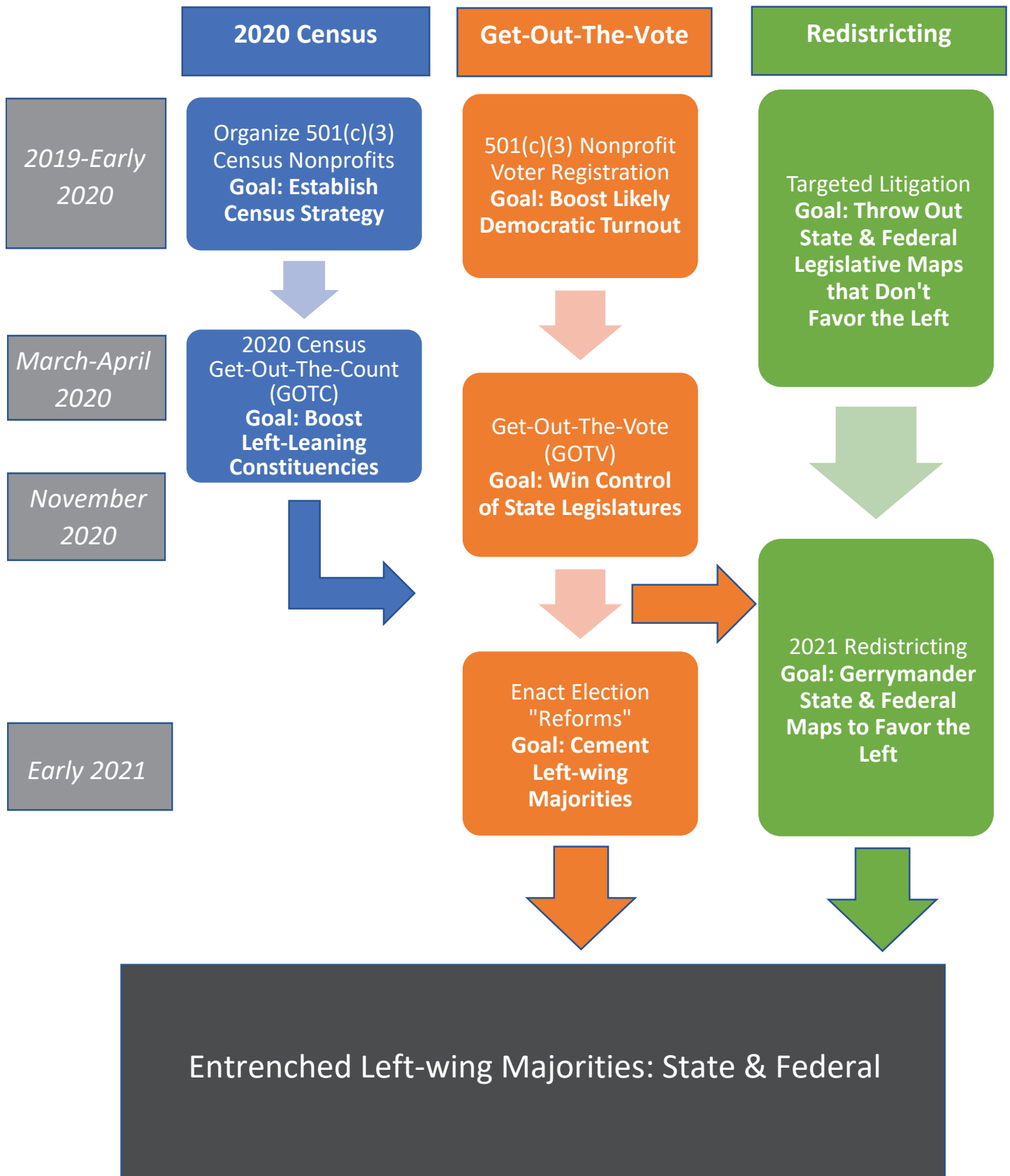
The proof that this phenomenon is best understood as Left vs. Right, *not* Republicans vs. Democrats, is provided the 2018 election of Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: this paladin of the Left defeated one of the most powerful members of the Democrat establishment before going on to champion such radical ideas as the Green New Deal, which remains controversial in her own caucus. More recently, the Left has seized on coronavirus turmoil to craft narratives that support radical electoral "reforms" they have long sought, using public health justifications that ignore the long-term consequences of overturning traditional election processes. If the Left wins big in 2020, they'll be able to enact their existing plans to build an entrenched left-wing majority in key states and Congress, all but ensuring a roadmap for their radical agenda in the coming decade that free-market conservatives will be powerless to stop.

The Left's plan has three steps, lubricated with torrents of mostly 501(c)(3) cash:

1. *Increase the count of traditionally left-leaning constituencies in the 2020 Census* (tens of millions of dollars from billionaire foundations going to dozens of left-wing activist groups who will Get Out The Count just as they Get Out The Vote [their actual language; see our most recent report—or for a real scare, visit the Funders Census Initiative 2020 site)

2. *Boost favorable voter turnout in 2020 to gain left-wing majorities in state legislatures using election "reforms" like vote by mail and nonprofit voter registration/GOTV* (Hundreds of millions of dollars from foundations going to hundreds of left-wing (c)(3) "charities")

3. *Control the 2021 redistricting process to draw congressional maps favoring the Left and enable other profound structural changes (including Electoral College reform)* (unlimited money for litigation is a major part of this "step," already in full swing in many states)

If the Left can bludgeon its way into power in battleground states, it will have the leverage to enact the socialist policies supported by an empowered radical wing of a major political party. ■

2020 Census

Get-Out-The-Vote

Redistricting

2019-Early 2020

Organize 501(c)(3) Census Nonprofits
Goal: Establish Census Strategy

501(c)(3) Nonprofit Voter Registration
Goal: Boost Likely Democratic Turnout

Targeted Litigation
Goal: Throw Out State & Federal Legislative Maps that Don't Favor the Left

March-April 2020

2020 Census Get-Out-The-Count (GOTC)
Goal: Boost Left-Leaning Constituencies

November 2020

Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV)
Goal: Win Control of State Legislatures

Early 2021

Enact Election "Reforms"
Goal: Cement Left-wing Majorities

2021 Redistricting
Goal: Gerrymander State & Federal Maps to Favor the Left

Entrenched Left-wing Majorities: State & Federal

Entry Name	Bucket
18F	census
Census Bureau National Advisory Committee on Racial, Ethnic, and Other Populations Membership List	census
Census Counts 2020	census
Communications Consortium Media Center	census
Desi Rodriguez-Lonebear	census
Ditas Katague	census
Hassan Jaber	census
Inderdeep Chatrath	census
Jocelyn Bissonnette	census
Keshia Morris	census
Kirsten Martin	census
Meghan Maury	census
Terri Ann Lowenthal	census
The Census Project	census
U.S. Census Bureau	census
Action for a Progressive Future (RootsAction)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
All Americans Vote	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
America Votes	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
America Votes Action Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Arizona Advocacy Foundation	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Arizona Advocacy Network	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Arizona Wins	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
CAIR San Francisco Bay Area	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
California Calls	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
California Calls Education Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
California Clean Money Action Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Center for Civic Design	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Center for Secure and Modern Elections	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Center for Technology and Civic Life	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Civic Participation Action Fund (CPAF)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Climate Hawks Vote	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Common Cause	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Community Change Voters	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Community Voters Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Democracy Funders Collaborative	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Democracy North Carolina	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Election Protection Coalition	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Election Security Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Enlight Foundation	GOTV/VBM/Election Day

Environmental Voter Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Equal Citizens Foundation	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Fair Elections Center	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Fair Fight	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Fair Fight Action	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Fair Fight Initiative	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Fair Fight PAC	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Fairness Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Fix the System	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Foundation for Civic Leadership	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Institute for Research on Presidential Elections (IRPE)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Issue One	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Jennifer Flanagan	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Jennifer Morrell	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Jon Liss	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Kansans for Secure Elections	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Kentuckians for the Commonwealth	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Kentucky Coalition	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights (LCCHR)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
League of Women Voters (LWV)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Left Action	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Liberation Road	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Massachusetts Peace Action	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Massachusetts Voter Education Network (MassVOTE)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Movement Voter Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
NAACP National Voter Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
NARAL Pro-Choice North Carolina	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
National Association of Nopartisan Reformers	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
National Iranian American Council (NIAC) Action	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
New Florida Majority	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
New Florida Majority Education Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
New Georgia Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
New Virginia Majority	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
New Virginia Majority Education Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Next Up Foundation	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Nonprofit VOTE	GOTV/VBM/Election Day

Ohio Committee for Safe and Secure Elections	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
One Pennsylvania	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
People Demanding Action	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
PIRG New Voters Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Progress America	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
ProgSec	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Richard L. Hasen	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Rock the Vote	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Rock the Vote Action	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
State Infrastructure Fund (SIF)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
State Power Caucus	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Trusted Elections Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Vote Common Good	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Vote Early Day	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Vote Forward (Vote FWD)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Vote Smart (Project Vote Smart)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voter Engagement Evaluation Project (VEEP)	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voter Engagement Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voter Participation Center	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voter Registration Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voter Registration Project Education Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voter Rights Action	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voters Not Politicians	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
VoteVets Action Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
VoteVets.org PAC	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voting Information Project	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Voting Works	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Washington Community Action Education and Research Fund	GOTV/VBM/Election Day

Washington Community Action Network	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
When We All Vote	GOTV/VBM/Election Day
Commonwealth Institute for Fiscal Analysis	redistricting/electoral reform
Fix Congress Now	redistricting/electoral reform
Heather Smith	redistricting/electoral reform
John Koza	redistricting/electoral reform
Leadership Now Project	redistricting/electoral reform
League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF)	redistricting/electoral reform
National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC)	redistricting/electoral reform
National Popular Vote (NPV)	redistricting/electoral reform
National Redistricting Action Fund (NRAF)	redistricting/electoral reform
National Redistricting Foundation (NRF)	redistricting/electoral reform
Nilmini Rubin	redistricting/electoral reform
North Dakota Voters First	redistricting/electoral reform
OneVirginia2021	redistricting/electoral reform
Patrick Rosenstiel	redistricting/electoral reform
Tom Golisano	redistricting/electoral reform
Alaskans for Better Elections	Unite America partner
Bridge Alliance	Unite America partner
Defending Democracy Together (DDT)	Unite America partner
FairVote	Unite America partner
Fix US	Unite America partner
Kathryn Murdoch	Unite America partner
Marc Merrill	Unite America partner
Millennial Action Project	Unite America partner
Open Primaries	Unite America partner
Pennsylvanians Against Gerrymandering	Unite America partner
People Not Politicians	Unite America partner
Ranked Choice Voting 2020 Committee	Unite America partner
Represent Women	Unite America partner
Represent.Us	Unite America partner
Ron Shaich	Unite America partner
Stand Up Republic (SUR)	Unite America partner
Stand Up Republic Foundation (Stand Up Ideas)	Unite America partner
Unite America	Unite America partner
Unite America Institute	Unite America partner
Unite Colorado	Unite America partner
Unite Virginia	Unite America partner
Vote at Home	Unite America partner
Voting Rights Lab	Unite America partner
With Honor Action	Unite America partner

COLORADO'S BIG BLUE POLITICAL MACHINE

Before he became the Democratic presidential nominee in 1932, New York Gov. Franklin Delano Roosevelt had to defeat Democratic rival Al Smith, a former New York governor and member of the notorious Tammany Hall political machine. In a hotel suite at the Democratic National Convention, New York City crime boss Charlie "Lucky" Luciano, a provider of financial grease for Tammany, was working to engineer Smith's nomination. In another hotel suite, another Tammany delegation, led by yet another New York City underworld leader (Luciano ally Frank Costello) was working for the nomination of Roosevelt.

Traditional political machines such as Tammany were built to seize their corrupt slices of power before candidates were even selected, let alone elected. Real political competition from ambitious politicians was bad for business.

For example, Tammany's side bet on FDR failed. As president the revered Democrat quickly snapped the party's 100-plus-year-old connection to Tammany and set in motion the machine's demise. He even nominally assisted an anti-Tammany Republican's election as New York City mayor.

Political machines worked because they often exercised monopoly control over the machinery of government—including the politicians—and divvied up the spoils of that power to their members: contractors, government employees, connected businesses, organized crime, and so forth. Where ambitious politicians can fight among themselves to seize majority power, a political machine has either lost control or does not exist.

Heading into election night 2004, Colorado was a decisively Republican state, with a Republican governor and GOP majorities in both chambers of the legislature. Republican politicians were in control of a "trifecta" monopoly over the three policymaking centers of state government. The Republican monopoly had existed for four of the prior six years.

What happened next is chronicled in The Blueprint: How Democrats Won Colorado and Why Republicans Everywhere Should Care, a 2010 book written by Rob Witwer, a former Republican lawmaker from Colorado, and Adam Schrager, a local political reporter. Ten years later, the lessons from their book continue to be relevant well beyond Colorado.

In the summer of 2004, four left-leaning Colorado multimillionaires hatched a plot to turn Colorado blue. The highest-profile member was and remains Jared Polis, a serial entrepreneur in the early era of dot-com internet commerce who was worth an estimated $174 million by the end of the 20th century.

Ken Braun is CRC's senior investigative researcher and authors profiles for InfluenceWatch.org and the Capital Research magazine.

Tim Gill, one of the two richest members of the "Gang of Four" who remade Colorado politics, is the founder of Quark, a desktop publishing software firm far more famous than he is. In December 2019, the author of a rare magazine profile of Gill marveled at Gill's sustained anonymity, despite his wealth and political activism. Gill offered up a guess that just 1 percent of the state's population knew who he was.

In the summer of 2004 four left-leaning Colorado multimillionaires hatched a plot to do the Democrats' job for them. By the November 2006 election the so-called Gang of Four and the "Roundtable" allies they brought into their orbit had flipped the trifecta to the Democrats and constructed a political infrastructure that has so far prevented Republicans from recovering.

When that infrastructure became fully operational in 2006, according to The Blueprint, it turned individual candidates into "simply bit players in their own campaigns" with little control over messages or strategies. Referencing both the victorious Democrat and her vanquished GOP rival in one hotly contested Colorado Senate race, the authors write the candidates "could have taken six-month vacations" and few voters would have noticed.

The politicians had ceased to matter. The Gang of Four had built a modern political machine.

The Rise of the Machine

Mark Twain is credited (though perhaps not accurately) with saying, "History doesn't repeat itself but it often rhymes." The Colorado machine was not in any fashion a direct descendant of the corrupt old political machines: It was not funded or influenced by gangsters, and it was not created from a desire to financially benefit its multimillionaire creators. In place of the drive for graft, the Colorado cabal pursued leftist ideological and policy goals instead.

But while it was built to accomplish very different objectives, the Colorado machine's biggest gears closely resembled the moving parts that kept old Tammany and its historical cousins in business.

It rhymed.

On election night 2004, slightly more than 1.1 million Colorado voters (almost 52 percent of them) gave the state's nine electoral votes toward the reelection tally of President George W. Bush. On paper this day should not have marked the decisive beginning of 16 years (and counting) of sustained heartburn for Colorado Republicans.

The last Democratic majority to rule the Colorado House of Representatives had packed its bags 28 years earlier, back when President Jimmy Carter moved into the White House. With a 37-28 GOP majority going into the 2004 campaign, those not in the know could be forgiven for thinking the Republicans would cruise into 2005 still in control of the Colorado House.

But a slim and seemingly improbable 33-32 Democratic majority emerged. The narrow win betrayed what was to become a lasting reversal of fortune. For the next 16 years, through 2020, House Democrats would lose their majority for only two of them.

Similarly, in the Colorado Senate, Democrats had controlled the show for only two of the prior 52 years—dating all the way back to the Kennedy administration. But that rare Democratic majority had been recent, following the 2000 election. Even though Colorado staggers the election of its state senators so not all seats were in play in 2004, the Republicans held just an 18-17 majority.

Left-leaning lobbyist and political consultant Ted Trimpa was credited in The Blueprint with showing multimillionaire Tim Gill why he needed to put his money behind ousting Republicans. Trimpa would later advise national left-leaning political organizations seeking to replicate the Colorado success. As of 2016, Trimpa was on the board of American Bridge 21st Century Foundation, a lefty political organization founded by Clinton family attack dog David Brock.

That too was flipped to an 18-17 Democratic majority.

As with the House, it presaged a radically altered future. Through 2020, Senate Republicans would claw back majority status for just four of 16 years.

Then came the gubernatorial election of 2006. Incumbent Republican Gov. Bill Owens could not run for reelection due to term limits. Owens had been reelected in 2002 with a commanding mandate of nearly 63 percent. Another total

reversal of fortune ensued: Democrat Bill Ritter won with 57 percent.

The new Democratic governor swept into power with a 39-26 Democratic House majority and a 20-15 Democratic Senate majority.

So, Democrats began January 2007 with a monopoly on policymaking power they had not enjoyed since the Cuban Missile Crisis—and a total reversal of their status from just four years earlier.
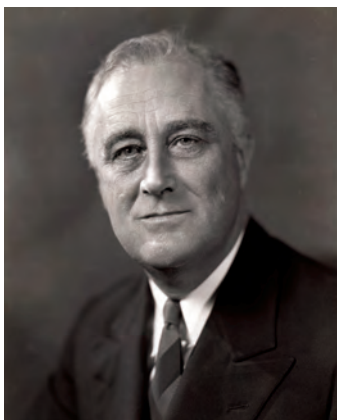
But they weren't running the machine that put them there.

The Gang of Four

In 1958, as he was contemplating his run for the White House in 1960, then-Sen. John F. Kennedy began a speech with a self-deprecating joke about his father, one of the richest men in America. Pretending to quote a telegram just arrived from his "generous daddy," the future president read: "Dear Jack – Don't buy a single vote more than necessary – I'll be damned if I am going to pay for a landslide."

Tim Gill. Extraordinarily wealthy Americans seeking to reshape the political landscape generally keep a lower profile. That was certainly true of Tim Gill, one of the Gang of Four's two richest members. He is the founder of Quark, a desktop publishing software firm far more famous than he is.

In December 2019 a Denver magazine ran a profile titled "Who is Tim Gill?" The author marveled at Gill's sustained

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (pictured left) had to defeat a member of the notorious Tammany Hall political machine. In a hotel suite at the Democratic National Convention, New York City crime boss Charlie "Lucky" Luciano (pictured right), a provider of financial grease for Tammany, was working to engineer the nomination of FDR's opponent, while in different hotel suite, another Tammany delegation, led by Luciano ally Frank Costello, was working for the nomination of Roosevelt.

anonymity, despite his wealth and role in altering the state's politics. Gill offered up a guess that just 1 percent of the state's population knew who he was.

Likely fewer knew Gill in 1992, let alone that he was gay. That year more than 53 percent of Coloradans approved Amendment 2, a proposal to exclude homosexuals from the state's anti-discrimination laws. Remembering the vote eight years later, he told The Chronicle of Philanthropy, "Nothing can compare to the psychological trauma of realizing that more than half the people in your state believe that you don't deserve equal rights."

Amendment 2 was invalidated by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1996, but not before its passage motivated Gill to create the Gill Foundation to advance LGBT civil liberties issues. The authors of The Blueprint wrote that Gill endowed his foundation with $200 million in 1994 ($351 million in 2020 dollars). Gill sold his share of the Quark in 1999 for what a Rolling Stone profile estimated was $500 million ($781 million in 2020 dollars).

Patricia "Pat" Stryker. Similar to Gill's low profile, The Blueprint described Patricia "Pat" Stryker as someone who "could slip unobserved into a PTA meeting or join a group of soccer moms and never seem out of place." That would be remarkable for a woman Forbes estimated to have a net worth of $2.7 billion (as of October 2020).

In 2001 she created and funded the Bohemian Foundation, a nonprofit donation vehicle. Foundation Search, a record-keeping service reporting on the nonprofit sector, shows several million dollars in donations from Bohemian to left-leaning advocacy organizations such as the Bell Policy Center, Brennan Center, and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW).

She of one of three heirs to the Stryker medical equipment fortune. Her brother Jon Stryker, with a Forbes-estimated net worth of $4 billion in October 2020, is also a prodigious donor to left-leaning political efforts and LGBT civil rights causes. Billionaire sister Ronda Stryker rounds out what is collectively one of the wealthiest families in America.

Rutt Bridges. Petroleum geologist Rutt Bridges, the third member of the Gang of Four, did not have Stryker-sized money but still said he had acquired "more money than I could spend in my life." In 1999 he used some of it to fund the Bighorn Center for Public Policy, a Colorado think tank with the purported mission of allowing the "political middle

a credible and legitimate voice in the state's increasingly polarized landscape." Perhaps more revealing were his federal political donations for the contemporaneous 2000 election cycle, which show a rigidly polarized $17,000 given exclusively to Democratic candidates and political committees.

Jared Polis. The highest-profile Gang of Four member was and remains Jared Polis. A serial entrepreneur in the early era of dot-com internet commerce, he was worth an estimated $174 million by the end of the 20th century ($263 million in 2020 dollars). He retired from business and loudly turned to politics. In 2000 he put $1 million into his campaign to win a seat on the Colorado Board of Education—an unpaid, part-time post. The GOP opponent raised a mere $10,000 and later joked he would have happily dropped out if Polis had just agreed to split the difference and give him $500,000.

Indicative of Colorado's red-state tilt two decades ago, Polis's herculean 100-1 financial advantage produced a paltry winning margin of just 90 votes out of 1.6 million cast. A political career born on the lucky side of an electoral rounding error has not faltered since. In 2008 Polis won the first of five terms representing Colorado in the U.S. House. In 2018 he was elected governor of Colorado by a nearly 10 percentage point margin.
According to Time magazine, this made him the first openly-gay man to become a state governor. His estimated net worth as of 2017 was $306 million ($325 million in 2020 dollars).

He will continue to get noticed for some time to come: He celebrated his 45th birthday in May 2020.

Political Speech Restrictions

This alliance of multimillionaires coalesced shortly after Colorado voters approved Amendment 27 in 2002.

Of the many factors necessary for the creation of the Colorado machine, the impact of this referendum is hardest to exaggerate. Promoted by the left-leaning advocacy group Common Cause, the amendment to the Colorado state constitution capped the amount that a single individual could contribute each election cycle at $200 for state legislative candidates, $500 for gubernatorial candidates, and $2,500 for state political parties.

In The Blueprint, Alan Philp, former executive director of the Colorado Republican Party, states that prior to 2002 the "key group of Republican donors" was a vast collection of "medium-sized" contributors who could give in the "$1,000 to $25,000 range."

This widely dispersed base of support placed financial power with whichever politicians could most effectively raise and thereafter control political money. Before 2002 the politicians—not their donors—had the most prominent influence over which candidates and races received support and how campaigns were run.

Politicians, like politicians everywhere, played the political game to advance their own careers. Whatever criticisms might be made of this arrangement, it was not a political machine.

It was also not going to last.

According to The Blueprint, Amendment 27 sharply shifted this power to individuals and institutions with far larger stashes of money. After it passed, according to Philp, "the only people who could make a big difference were super-rich donors—those who can give $100,000 or more to outside groups—and labor unions, who got special loopholes under the new rules."

It was a wide-open invitation for the Gang of Four and their Roundtable. "Common Cause knew exactly what they were doing," said Philp, in The Blueprint. He argued that restricting the direct flow of money to politicians from those many medium-sized donors was a deliberate attempt to financially kneecap Republicans and give a "systematic advantage to Democrats."

Amendment 27 did not merely make the creation of a political machine more likely. It might have made it so inevitable that one was created, in part, by accident. The Blueprint reveals the Roundtable members who built the Colorado machine did not fully understand at the outset what they were starting:

"We really didn't truly know how big this would become," said Polis. "Clearly, when we started, we had no idea. I didn't know this would have great historical significance, nor did anybody there, that we would transform Colorado. 'Let's get together and maybe we can flip the State Senate,' that's what we were thinking."

The Culture Wars

As noted, on election night 2004 they flipped the Colorado Senate and the House on their way to a whole lot more. Before it happened, in March 2004, the GOP-controlled Colorado House began committee hearings on a bill that would prohibit sex-ed classes in public schools from providing information on non-heterosexual behavior. Tim Gill was seated in the hearing room as the bill was debated, and The Blueprint portrays this legislation as the deciding factor leading to Gill's place in the Gang.

LGBT rights was a hot-button issue in 2004 when voters in 13 states approved proposals to ban same-sex marriages. Colorado's prohibition would be approved in 2006. These prohibitions, enacted in 30 states from 1998 through 2012, were ephemeral victories that were all overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 2015.

Unquestionably, Colorado's blue political machine was created and sustained in large measure because of its participants' ideological hunger to reverse free-market economic and labor policies and then sustain those victories by slamming the door on every potential GOP comeback.

However, the right-leaning social agenda of Colorado Republicans in the early 2000s was a major—arguably even essential—motivational fuel that started the machine up. Advancing LGBT issues was a primary policy concern for Gill, but fellow Gang of Four member Polis was also gay. And Pat Stryker's billionaire brother, like Gill, was a big benefactor of LGBT-rights causes.

When Gill left the room after watching the debate on the sex-ed bill, he had mentally placed political targets on the careers of many Republican lawmakers. According to The Blueprint, he ran into Democratic State Rep. Alice Madden and told her his new motto: "Somebody's gotta go." Madden became the House Majority Leader when Colorado Democrats took control after the 2004 election. She was an original member of the Roundtable of left-leaning power brokers who built the machine with the Gang of Four's money. Looking back at that accomplishment for The Blueprint, she references a note from her files in which she had jotted down the following: "In 2004, the Republican majority leader . . . said the biggest threat to Colorado was gay marriage."

In a March 2005 news conference that same Republican introduced a proposal to ban same-sex marriages and asserted the prohibition would create stronger marriages

and alleviate pressure on prison and school finance budgets. Less helpful for his cause was another Republican lawmaker at the event who was quoted in the Rocky Mountain News talking up the supposed case of a nine-year-old Indian girl wedding a stray dog. This was presented as evidence that allowing same-sex unions in Colorado would unleash a Pandora's box.

As it turned out, the Republicans opened that box . . . and Tim Gill was inside.

A very smart man with a net worth in the mid-nine-figures had been turned into a formidable GOP foe. As recently as 2003, according to The Blueprint, a far less politically agitated Gill had given $10,000 to the Republican Governors Association.

The Roundtable

Left-leaning lobbyist and political consultant Ted Trimpa was credited in The Blueprint with showing Gill why he needed to put his money behind ousting Republicans. Similarly, Albert Yates, the then-recently retired president of Colorado State University, was the catalyst for Pat Stryker's participation in the Gang of Four. (Stryker's Bohemian Foundation is also a big donor to the school.)

Trimpa and Yates would both go on to roles assisting national left-leaning political organizations that were seeking to replicate the Colorado success. As of 2016, Trimpa was on the board of American Bridge 21st Century Foundation, a lefty political organization founded by Clinton family attack dog David Brock. Yates is a board member of Catalist, a data firm that assists left-of-center political and policy organizations.

These two political consiglieres and the Gang of Four multimillionaires initially began plotting among themselves. They added Lynne Mason, the political director of the Colorado Education Association, one of the state's largest left-leaning public employee unions. Mason roped in representatives from the state's other left-of-center political powers, including the Colorado Trial Lawyers Association, the Colorado affiliate of the National Abortion Rights Action League, the Colorado AFL-CIO, and the Colorado Conservation Voters. State Rep. Alice Madden, the Democratic leader in the Colorado House, joined the group. So did her Democratic counterpart in the Colorado Senate, State Sen. Joan Fitz-Gerald.

The gathering later identified as the "Roundtable" began to meet weekly at the headquarters of the Colorado Education Association. Ted Trimpa led the discussions and represented Gill. If the embryonic machine could be said to have its first political boss, it was arguably Trimpa.

But as with the traditional political machines, Trimpa's leadership role reflected only his talent for keeping the entire group on task toward a shared agenda. It did not indicate any preference for his priorities or those of Gill. According to The Blueprint, the meetings never made time for discussing such things:

Discussion of issues that might divide the group were strictly verboten. "All the participants checked their political agendas at the door," said Polis later. "There was never any policy discussed. There were never any issues discussed. There was simply a group of people who believed that all of our issues, and regardless of what they were, what our differences were, would be better represented in a Democratic majority."

The group also swiftly concluded they were building a replacement for Colorado's Democratic Party—and they were eager to do so. The Blueprint noted the recent enactment of Amendment 27 had "all but killed political parties." It quoted Jared Polis saying it "took parties out of the mix as a money entity" and "guaranteed that the party itself, Republican or Democrat, could not possibly be the main entity that . . . ran campaigns."

Counterintuitively, the Democratic Party and its politicians had not been built with a singular focus on the only thing that mattered to the Roundtable: taking power. Echoing a concern The Blueprint stated was widely held by the group, Jared Polis said political leaders controlling the big money in both parties had led to a profligate policy of rewarding loyalty, spending inefficiently, and having "a tendency to put valuable resources into races they're probably not going to win because they want to win friends."

In place of loyalty-fueled rival fiefdoms, the Roundtable designed a unified political machine singularly engineered to seize power. Political races were selected and funded solely because of their likelihood of beating as many Republicans as possible. Nobody was in this to make friends.

Each of the left-leaning labor unions and interest groups in the coalition brought political infrastructure and money to the Roundtable and directed those assets to the House

and Senate races the group agreed were critical to winning majorities. As an example, The Blueprint reports the AFL-CIO collected $400,000 in $50 donations from its members, and then it fired those bundles of money at Roundtable-targeted races.

But the commitment from the Gang of Four was a gamechanger that helped keep all others onside. The Blueprint pegged total spending from the Roundtable on 2004 races at $3.6 million, with roughly $2.5 million coming from the Gang. Stryker gave at least $845,000, Gill almost $775,000, and Polis and Bridges each forked over more than $400,000.

The normal political campaign irritation of diverting valuable time and energy to raising money had ceased to exist for the machine. According to one senior staffer, "fundraising basically consisted of occasional reminders to donors to let them know we needed payment on their pledges."

The Blueprint reports the resources and focus assembled by the Roundtable was unprecedented, largely hidden before deployment, and unmatched by any other political entity in the state that year: "Republican candidates had no idea what was coming their way."

The Machine Attacks

The mailing lists and membership of the interest groups within the Roundtable formed part of the ground game. The AFL-CIO alone claimed to have provided 2,700 people from almost 200 union locals who knocked on 75,000 doors and made 200,000 phone calls to just the targeted legislative districts. (For comparison, Colorado voters across the entire state cast just over 2.1 million total votes for U.S. president that year.)

The funding from the Gang of Four and others supplemented the ground attack and provided paid media and direct mail bombardments. This led to the creation of several independent political committees to take in the Roundtable money and spend it on the targeted races—effectively the replacement for the old Democratic political infrastructure.

On the ground, one of these committees—the Coalition for a Better Colorado—took out advertisements in newspapers and developed a 750-strong army of door-to-door canvassers who were paid more than $10 per hour, worked as many hours as they desired, and were fed a

meal after their shift ended. The canvassers carried digital devices to record their interactions—a relatively new campaign technology for 2004 that was rarely used in state legislative races—and the information was transferred to the coalition's master database after each shift.

The canvassing was making critical personal contacts, a major advantage for candidates in down-ballot campaigns in which name ID is lower. But it was also building individual voter profiles to allow sophisticated follow-up contacts micro-targeted to the concerns of each voter. Coalition for a Better Colorado plowed $220,000 into this ground game from early September 2004 to early October, according to The Blueprint. Then, for the last four days before the election day, they ramped it up and poured in another $174,000. Then there were the nasty air attacks: direct mail and broadcast media.

The Roundtable's political committees spent $500,000 to win just one race for the Colorado Senate, bombarding the district with a mailbox and media assault that former Republican Gov. Bill Owens described as "financial atomic bombs." The Republican candidate began in the summer of 2004 with a 53-36 percent polling lead—generally the sort of support to scare away serious challenges. But by late October the "bombs" had blasted him into a 53-38 deficit.

Alice Madden, the Democratic House leader, referred to one moderate-voting Republican state representative as "the nicest guy." But based on a vote against a domestic violence bill, her Roundtable allies went after the "nicest guy" with direct mail portraying a woman with a blackened eye on the cover. "I mean," said Madden, "that was pretty intense, obviously."

Another moderate Republican state representative was hit with eight negative direct mail pieces over just 21 days in October. One compared her to a pig, with her photo and alleged bad votes on the inside, concealed behind a cover bearing the message: "No matter how you dress it up, it still stinks." Out of 27,000 votes cast, she lost by 48.

Voters in six of the House districts won by the Roundtable were also carried by President Bush. Winning just one of them would have saved the GOP House majority.

Solidifying Power

As noted earlier, the completion of the machine's electoral power grab occurred two years later at the November 2006 election when Democrats expanded their majorities in the

legislature and captured the governor's office. Unlike two years earlier, the Roundtable could not easily sneak up on the Republicans. Learning from their earlier election beating, The Blueprint reported well-heeled Republican donors attempted to replicate the Roundtable's work with independent political committees of their own. This "Trailhead Group" raised and spent $5.3 million in 2006.

But by this point Colorado's blue machine was mature. It had dozens of nominally independent political committees, left-wing media centers, opposition research entities, and ideological non-profits working to support its hold on power. To make funding decisions for it all, Al Yates had helped the Gang of Four morph into the Colorado Democracy Alliance (CoDA), a funding committee that operated like a political venture capital firm. With that in place, Yates roped in even more wealthy left-leaning individual donors and new organizational members such as Colorado's branch of the SEIU.

It was, according to The Blueprint, the "Roundtable on steroids." But though its components were centrally funded, they were—at least as a legal matter—independently governed.

Even as media was becoming aware of what had occurred with the Gang of Four in 2004, the fractured structure of CoDA's parts made it hard for outside observers to figure out what was happening in 2006. The Blueprint authors wrote that reporters "never fully figured out CoDA until nearly two years after the 2006 election cycle."

The media later learned the 2006 budget to fund all the CoDA tentacles was set at nearly $11.3 million. Just one CoDA tentacle was given an initial budget of nearly $2 million and the singular goal of attacking the GOP gubernatorial candidate.

And CoDA was ready to prove it was a true political machine by doing what machine's must do best—slam the door closed on any potential rivals.

Unlike CoDA's vast and difficult-to-understand network, Trailhead's work was done by a single committee. CoDA flipped this into a vulnerability with nuisance lawsuits tying Trailhead in legal knots that slowed its campaigning

and led to depositions of unhappy donors. The Blueprint reported "the pace of lawsuits was dizzying enough to make Trailhead a major story of the election cycle."

But the Colorado Democracy Alliance had been built for more than just the 2006 success. Al Yates had led the group to create what The Blueprint referred to as a "permanent, far-reaching, progressive infrastructure that would exist year round, not just during election cycles," and "change Colorado's political landscape completely, and permanently." The decade since The Blueprint was published in 2010 shows the durability of the model.

Jared Polis is now the third consecutive Democratic governor—arguably the political boss of the machine he helped build—with Democratic majorities ruling the entire legislature. That monopoly on policymaking power hasn't been unusual: It has existed for eight of the past 14 years. During the same era Republicans did not enjoy even a single day when they controlled more than half of the legislature.

Setbacks have occurred: Democrats have temporarily lost one or the other chamber of the legislature, but never both at the same time.

Like Tammany Hall before it, this political machine has no loyalty to any politicians, only to its membership. And it has demonstrated a perfect record of either holding all power and delivering the benefits to that membership or—failing that—preventing the rise of any rivals.

It is tempting to assume this dominance occurred because Colorado voters simply drifted left over those years, but more than a few big hints point the other way. In the November 2014 election Republican Cory Gardner defeated incumbent Democratic U.S. Sen. Mark Udall. In 2014, incumbent Democratic Gov. John Hickenlooper eked out just a 3.3 percentage point reelection win, with less than 50 percent of the total vote tally for governor. Similarly, Hillary Clinton won the state over President Donald Trump in November 2016, but with only 48 percent of Colorado voters supporting her.

Colorado is still a purple political state, not yet a blue state. But it has certainly become a machine state. ■

UNITE AMERICA:
THE NONPROFIT NETWORK BEHIND "VOTE BY MAIL"
Unite America's Plan for Radical Electoral Change

Based in Denver, Colorado, Unite America was formed as the Centrist Project in 2013 by economics professor Charles Wheelan, who unsuccessfully ran for Congress (D-IL) in 2009. Wheelan is currently co-chair of Unite America.

Credit: Unite America. License: https://bit.ly/2Z1rDyl.

Summary: *Despite appearances that the coronavirus pandemic is driving calls for nationwide vote by mail, a single non-profit—ironically called Unite America—is the linchpin of a sprawling web of groups advocating for radical electoral change. And although this web includes left-wing and center-right factions, the outcomes they demand would overwhelmingly benefit the far Left. Essentially, Unite America is working to tear down and remake the election system in its own image.*

The coronavirus pandemic appears to be behind calls for a nationwide vote-by-mail option in the 2020 elections. But universal vote by mail actually has long been a top priority of the Left, despite the great danger of vote fraud it brings.

A single nonprofit is the linchpin of a sprawling web of groups advocating for radical electoral change—change that starts, but does not end, with a permanent vote-from-home option. Even though the groups in this "nonpartisan" network—ironically called Unite America—come from both left-wing and center-right factions, the outcomes they demand overwhelmingly benefit the far Left.

Unite America operates as a coalition that "partners" with its supporters, receiving wider recognition from the various legacy groups in the network. It is registered as Carey committee, a special kind of political action committee (PAC) that can both make direct contributions to candidates' campaigns and spend unlimited sums on independent groups, advertisements, and other expenditures that bolster campaigns.

Unite America's Origins

Based in Denver, Colorado, the group was formed as the Centrist Project in 2013 by economics professor Charles Wheelan, who unsuccessfully ran for Congress (D-IL) in 2009. Wheelan is currently co-chair of Unite America.

For its first few years, Unite America dedicated all its efforts to helping independent candidates win elections. In 2018, Unite America was involved in campaigns in Colorado, Washington, Arizona, New Mexico, Alaska, Oregon, and Maine. Of the 431 independent candidates that ran in 2018, only 14 were elected, and only one was in a competitive three-way race. Since Unite America aimed to act as the "party" for independents that year, its leaders concluded based on the results that its strategy had failed. "The midterm elections failed to demonstrate that there is any meaningful, existing constituency for centrist, independent candidates," concluded the group's recap report.

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After researching why it had not succeeded, Unite America shifted its resources. The group now argued for radical changes to the election process in battleground states and nationwide. They demanded policies such as a ranked-choice voting system, automatic voter registration, limitations to gerrymandering (or even the alleged elimination of gerrymandering), and the adoption of open primaries.

It has sought to achieve these ends by working with its largely left-of-center partners and through funding organizations—such as Alaskans for Better Elections, Pennsylvanians Against Gerrymandering, Unite Virginia, and Oklahoma-based People Not Politicians—to push for policy reform in their respective states. It has also funded groups such as Bill Kristol's Defending Democracy Together, a nominally conservative Never Trump group that also receives funding from Democracy Fund Voice, a pass-through group founded by left-wing eBay founder and chairman Pierre Omidyar.

Unite America also has a 501(c)(3) counterpart, a policy research group known as the Unite America Institute. The institute was created in 2017 when the Unite America leadership converted an existing but inactive nonprofit called the Common Sense Coalition Education Fund, which was based in Kansas, into a sister group for the Unite America PAC. In August 2018, the group was renamed Unite America Institute. Initially set up to provide research, polling data, and citizen outreach for the independent candidates Unite America was trying to help, the institute morphed into a general research outfit designed to bolster the radical changes to American elections that Unite America promotes.

Unite America's Policy Agenda

Unite America advocates for independent redistricting commissions as a solution to gerrymandering, but it omits certain blue states including California from its list of worst offenders. These blue states are known for having unfair voting systems, but that doesn't fit the narrative. In theory, balanced independent commissions establish California's federal and state legislative districts. But in practice these commissions are anything but balanced; they've been criticized by even the left-wing watchdog group ProPublica. A thorough 2019 report showed how the commission was clearly hoodwinked by the Democratic establishment, which used dirty tricks and fake groups to fool the supposedly independent commissioners.

CRC's own research has shown that states with so-called "independent commissions" have markedly less "fair" results, and California leads the entire nation with the biggest partisan skewing of all the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The difference between this proposed universal vote-by-mail system and the existing practice of absentee ballots is that many states have tough, inconvenient precautionary measures to ensure that voter identification laws are not violated in the existing absentee voting process.

Instead of the current system in which voters choose one candidate on the ballot, Unite America wants to introduce ranked-choice voting, in which voters rank the candidates from most to least preferred. Unite America claims this will guarantee that the candidate with "majority support" wins the election, but depending on how things play out, a voter's vote might end up counting for a candidate placed far to the bottom of the voter's list.

Unite America also advocates for nationwide open primaries. This would abolish voter registration along party lines—known as closed primaries—which it considers a form of voter suppression.

Of course, Unite America supports vote by mail for all, not just for the typical absentee ballot crowd such as the disabled

and the elderly. While the coronavirus pandemic is being cited as the impetus to implement it now, Unite America seeks to make vote by mail a permanent fixture for every election going forward. In defense of the proposal, its website claims most people do not have the time to wait in polling lines and that a universal vote by mail system would increase voter turnout, which would benefit "democracy." (James Madison did not respond to the request for comment.)

A ballot would be mailed to everyone who opted to partic-ipate a week before a given election, and the voters would need either to mail it back or to drop it off at a secure loca-tion. Unite America is aware that election integrity is a cause for concern, but its website only addresses the positives of mail-in voting, not the negatives, such as the tendency for mailed-in votes to go uncounted, the increased likelihood of people making mistakes on the ballots, the threat of vote buying, and the high vulnerability to outright voter fraud through ballot harvesting, phony ballots, ballot tampering among other well-worn techniques.

It also does not address the slippery slope inherent in dimin-ishing the local aspect of voting—the intrinsic tendency toward federalization of the voting process and that mail-in voting would bypass the checks and balances of in-person voting. Instead, Unite America focuses on the magic word "technology." Since remote voting would do away with the outdated computer technology used in voting booths, Unite America argues that it would create "an easily traceable paper trail to track ballots." One would have to be an enemy of progress to oppose this. Presumably, anyone who objects to universal online voting, when it is proposed down the road, would also be deemed an enemy of progress.

The difference between this proposed universal vote-by-mail system and the existing practice of absentee ballots is that many states have tough, inconvenient precautionary mea-sures to ensure that voter identification laws are not violated in the existing absentee voting process.

For example, in some states either a government-approved notary or two witnesses must attend the voter as the voter fills out the paperwork to confirm that someone else was not unlawfully using the voter's identity to commit voter fraud. Likewise, some states practice signature matching, in which the remote voter's signature is matched with their signature on record. Universal vote by mail would have none of these protections—Unite America certainly does not mention them on its website—because it would be impossible to require a witness to be present for every at-home voter in a given state if a majority of voters go for the at-home option.

The final principle Unite America claims to hold is its sup-port for "Unity Candidates," moderate and centrist candi-

> *Unite America supports vote by mail for all, not just for the typical absentee ballot crowd such as the disabled and the elderly.*

dates from either party. Unite America's homepage currently proclaims "Country over Party" in big letters. While this is its proclaimed goal, its de facto goal seems to be electing more Democratic candidates to office, since they are the politicians that will help push the policies outlined in Unite America's platform. The individuals on Unite America's board of direc-tors overwhelmingly contribute to Democratic candidates.
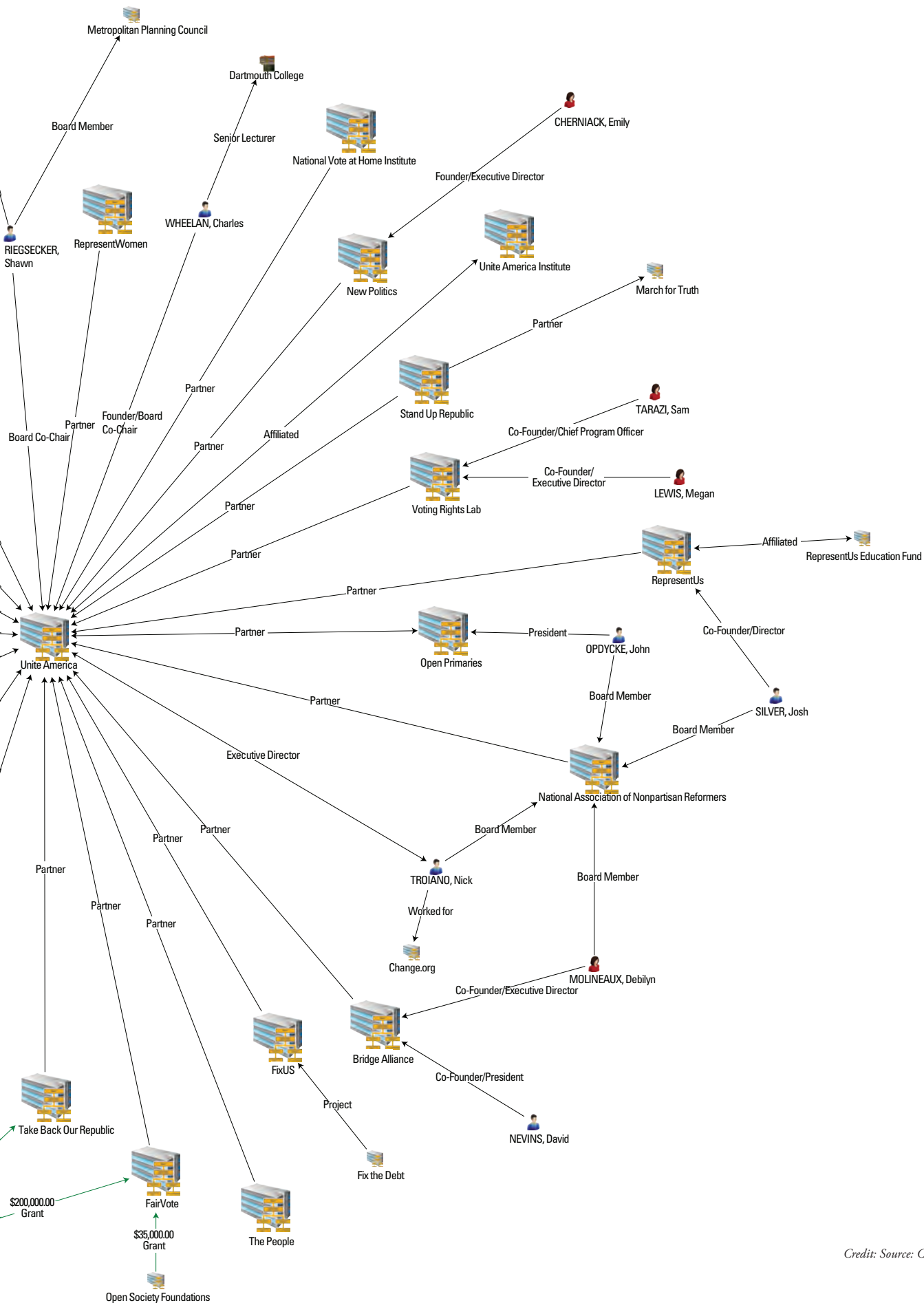
Unite America's Partners

Unite America lists 21 partners on its website. These include:

- R Street Institute, a purportedly free-trade think tank that has departed from most free market policy organizations by supporting the implementation of a carbon tax and the expansion of left-leaning labor-union affiliated worker centers. Roughly a quarter of its funding from 2012 to 2017 came from left-leaning foundations, such as the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Energy Foundation, and George Soros's Foundation to Promote Open Society.

- Bridge Alliance, a left-leaning coalition of over 100 political organizations that seeks to "transform the political process."

- Democracy Works, a left-of-center voter reform group funded by the Democracy Fund, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

- FairVote, a nonprofit that advocates for abolishing the electoral college.

- Us, a prominent political advocacy group well connected to liberal Hollywood celebrities.

Who Funds It?

Kathryn Murdoch, wife of James Murdoch (the son of con-servative media mogul Rupert Murdoch) and co-founder of the liberal Quadrivium Foundation, provided the majority ($3,807,000) of the contributions Unite America received in 2019 ($5,138,040). Kathryn Murdoch worked for the

Unite America's Network

Unite America is the linchpin of a sprawling web of groups advocating for radical electoral change. Even though the groups in this "nonpartisan" network come from both left-wing and center-right factions, the outcomes they demand would overwhelmingly benefit the far Left.

Credit: Source: Capital Research Center

Clinton Foundation as the director of strategy and communications from 2007 to 2011. In January 2020, Murdoch told Politico that she was "really excited to back whoever the [Democratic] nominee is, no matter what."

Unite America's other donors include Riot Games co-founder Marc Merrill and Panera Bread founder Ron Shaich.

Unite America itself contributes significant funds to liberal groups that support its agenda, including Alaskans for Better Elections, Fix Congress Now!, Represent.us, Pennsylvanians Against Gerrymandering, Secure Democracy, Ranked Choice Voting 2020, and With Honor Action.

Conclusion

Unite America, disgruntled by its failed efforts to change our political climate by working within the democratic system, is now working to tear down and remake the system in its image. That image is a collection of left-of-center policy groups administered by the professional managerial class and the wealthy liberal private foundations that line their pockets.

Implementing universal vote by mail by November 2020 would entail a massive overhaul of the American voting process, a complex system that spans the 50 states and District of Columbia, within the span of six months. This would unavoidably compromise election integrity.

The elderly and other Americans most at risk of coronavirus are already eligible to vote from home, so their risk is no excuse for overturning the entire country's electoral systems with vote by mail. And already this year, states such as Wisconsin have held primary elections without such radical transformations of voting and not seen increases in illness according to the CDC.

Vote-from-home advocates will need to find other excuses for their demands. ∎

THE FUNDERS COMMITTEE FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION

No single organization better illustrates the elite Left's coordination ahead of the 2020 Census and 2021 redistricting effort than the Funders Committee for Civic Participation, an affinity group for major donors and foundations to synchronize the flow of money to leftist political nonprofits.

The Funders Committee isn't itself a genuine nonprofit, but a front for NEO Philanthropy, a 501(c)(3) pass-through funder and leading "dark money" group that incubates new activist groups. As such, the Funders Committee doesn't file Form 990 reports with the IRS. This project-sponsor relationship highlights the Funders Committee's value to the Left—not as a grantmaker, but as a convener for donors to ensure their spending has the maximum impact on elections.

Funding "Civic Engagement"

The Funders Committee was formed in 1983 and boasts an impressive membership. The ranks of its 90-odd members include nearly every "dark money" funder on the Left as well as some of its biggest labor groups: Arabella Advisors, the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, George Soros's Open Society Foundations, eBay co-founder Pierre Omidyar's Democracy Fund, the National Education Association, and the AFL-CIO. The Democracy Alliance, which performs a similar role to the Funders Committee as coordinator for other grantmakers, is also a member. Another member, Bauman Family Foundation, is headed by Patricia Bauman, a Democratic mega-donor who sat on the boards of Catalist (the Democratic Party's data mine of choice), Democracy Alliance, and NEO Philanthropy itself.

As such, the Funders Committee is connected to nearly every prominent funder in left-wing politics. To give a sense of the amount of money involved, in 2016 alone their total combined expenditures exceeded $6 billion, according to their filings with the IRS.

The Funders Committee is headed by Eric Marshall, the former head of election activism for State Voices—a key voter-mobilization nonprofit—and manager of legal mobilization for the left-wing Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. He's also a board member for the Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, which tries to leverage the ballot initiative process in states to increase voter turnout.

The Funders Committee's goal is increasing "civic engagement" by generating high voter turnout among traditionally Democratic-leaning constituencies. At the heart of this scheme is the group's Integrated Voter Engagement model, a kind of flowchart for mobilizing voters "to win effective public policies." The model is composed of seven stages:

1. Organize and mobilize communities
2. Register voters
3. Develop strong leaders
4. Hold elected officials accountable

Hayden Ludwig is a research analyst at CRC.

5. Engage and educate the electorate

6. Get out the vote

7. Achieve policy impact

In 2017, the group updated its Integrated Voter Engagement "wheel" to include more spokes:

1. Defend and expand voting rights

2. Engage and educate the electorate

3. Register voters

4. Get out the vote

5. Protect the vote

6. Organize and mobilize communities

7. Develop strong leaders

8. Achieve policy impact

9. Persuade the public

10. Hold electeds [lawmakers] accountable

This sounds more like politics than philanthropy, but for these groups it's par for the course. Few would consider

"achieving policy impact" a proper goal of a tax-exempt charity, yet under IRS rules a 501(c)(3) nonprofit may engage in activities such as voter registration or registration for the 2020 Census so long as it doesn't cross into partisan politics—such as by registering only people who say they plan to vote for Republicans or encouraging voters to support Democrats.

The Funders Committee has called its model one of "the most effective ways to increase voter turnout," and little wonder. In 2005, the Funders Committee targeted the Colorado Progressive Coalition for funding and organizing efforts using the Integrated Voter Engagement model. The result was thousands of new voters who helped the coalition suspend the Colorado Taxpayers Bill of Rights in a referendum, opening the floodgates to greater state spending. The next year the Colorado Progressive Coalition followed up with a successful ballot initiative campaign to raise the Colorado minimum wage. In 2008, the coalition struck again, using the Funders Committee model to defeat a ballot initiative barring race- and sex-based affirmative action.

No model can guarantee a political outcome, and the Integrated Voter Engagement model by itself isn't enough to convert Republican-held states into Democratic strongholds. But by targeting Colorado with a closely coordinated and well-funded campaign, the Left turned a battleground state into a reliably Democratic state—thanks to the systematic efforts of the Democracy Alliance and Funders Committee.

And they are applying the Integrated Voter Engagement model to other battleground states and longstanding Democratic Party targets: Florida, Nevada, North Carolina, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, and Texas, to name a few. A 2012 Funders Committee report claimed that allied groups using the model registered "roughly 4.5 million people . . . over the last three election cycles." As the group puts it:

> *Strategies that integrate year-round nonpartisan voter engagement with community-organizing activities build a strong base of support that strengthens an organization's ability to hold decision-makers accountable, impact public policy and build long-term power for the communities they serve.*

Four Pillars for Permanent Control

Put into practice, this comes down to manipulating four avenues toward building virtually permanent left-wing majorities in Congress and state legislatures:

- The 2020 Census,
- 2021 redistricting,
- Voter registration and litigation, and
- Campaign finance reform.

Taken together, the Left hopes to create an insurmountable advantage for Democrats in elections for at least the next decade and the 2030 Census. Funders Committee is actively working along two of these avenues.

Funders Census Initiative 2020

The Funders Census Initiative (FCI) is the working group focused on shaping the 2020 Census to fit the Left's agenda, primarily by moving money from Funders Committee members to groups conducting GOTC (get-out-the-count) work to increase the count of Democratic-leaning constituencies across the country. As the Funders Committee puts it, "It is vital that grant makers get involved. The Census Bureau can't do it alone."

This effort began as early as 2013. In 2016, FCI released its 2020 Action Plan with three key goals: improving response rates, establishing state-based census projects to "mobilize constituencies," and expanding the committee's "universe of funders." To that end, FCI counts a number of special interest groups in its ranks, including Van Jones' Color of Change, the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and National Congress of American Indians. Each of these groups has conducted message testing on minority groups to determine census response rates.

Color of Change, for example, ran messages targeting black communities with the message, "President Trump has actively worked to put down the Black vote and reduce outreach to Black communities for healthcare enrollment, and he will do the same when it comes to Black people taking part in the Census."

Interestingly, the Bauman Family Foundation appears to play a lead role in FCI's activities, including the Funders Committee's efforts to counteract the Trump administration's proposed citizenship question in 2020. In March 2018, Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced that the U.S. Census Bureau would ask respondents if they were U.S. citizens in the 2020 census, immediately sparking furor from the Left. The Center for American Progress accused the Trump administration of attempting to "rig the census for partisan political benefit," claiming the question would scare recipients into not responding.

In response to Wilbur's announcement, the Funders Committee launched an "emergency briefing" led by the Bauman Family Foundation and three interest groups: Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), and Asian Americans Advancing Justice. In August, over 300 grantmakers, including numerous Funders Committee members, signed a letter to the Commerce Department urging it to withdraw the citizenship question. (Bauman executive director Garry Bass was listed as the letter's contact.) While the Funders Committee itself was not a signatory—NEO Philanthropy was—the group published letter templates for other groups to sign and send to the Commerce Department. After months of deliberation in the courts, the Trump administration decided not to include a citizenship question in the 2020 Census.

Little wonder, then, that its efforts have received hearty praise from leading Democrats. In 2015, then-Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MI) delivered the keynote address at the group's convening in St. Paul, Minnesota, held in preparation for the 2020 Census. Then-Sen. Al Franken (D-MN) told viewers how important the census is in "determining how many seats in Congress are allocated" in a video made specifically for the event:

I know you're working hard to make sure that the upcoming 2020 census goes smoothly, and gives a clear, accurate snapshot of our country. I commend your foresight—the census is very important and it's critical for us to get ready now, even though the census is still a few years away.

Money in Politics

Money in Politics is a Funders Committee working group based around a decade-old goal: overturning the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in Citizens United v. FEC (2010), which found that government efforts to restrict outside spending (independent expenditures) unconstitutionally violates Americans' First Amendment free speech rights. According to the Money in Politics working group, the Supreme Court's decision "dismantled longstanding protections against undue influence in politics" and exacerbated the "increasing impact of big, secret money in politics"—ironic, given the billions of dollars that Funders Committee members have poured into politics.

Most of the working group's actual operations are done in secret, but it does make known its goals of funding state ballot initiatives (presumably to roll back donor privacy laws) and "jurisprudence strategies to engaging conser-

FightBigMoney's Agenda

Policies

- Contribution Limits
- Small Donor Public Funding
- Disclosure and transparency
- Overturn Citizens United
- End SuperPACs
- Make FEC More Effective

Messaging

- Everyone Participates
- Everyone's Voice is Heard
- Everyone Knows who is Trying to Influence our Views and Legislation
- Everyone Plays by Fair, Common Sense Rules
- Everyone is Held Accountable With Enforceable Penalties

vatives and the New American Majority," likely meaning lawsuits to overturn voting integrity laws.

In 2016, Money in Politics released a slideshow presentation laying out its short- and long-term strategies as part of its FightBigMoney campaign. Those goals are coupled with talking points for members to use when selling their policies to the public, such as the Orwellian idea that limiting the amount of money Americans can donate to campaigns and PACs means that "everyone participates." The rest of the strategy hinges on getting ideological judges appointed to federal courts:

- "Provide future [Supreme Court] justices who are open to new frameworks";

- "Strategic litigation that employs these new theories and helps transform the law"; and

- "Raise the profile of money in politics as one of the key issues nominees to the Supreme Court and lower courts may be called upon to address."

The slideshow also listed the campaign's sponsors, each of which is a leading litigator-activist group:

- Brennan Center for Justice,
- Common Cause,
- Democracy 21,
- Democracy Matters,
- Demos,
- Every Voice,
- Free Speech for People,
- Issue One,
- People for the American Way,
- Public Citizen,
- Represent.Us, and
- U.S. Public Interest Research Group (US-PIRG).

Conclusion

What the Funders Committee for Civic Participation represents is the professionalization of nonprofit politics. Few Americans realize that it's this multi-billion-dollar nonprofit sphere—not the political parties—that increasingly influences the outcomes of elections and the future of public policy. But hardened leftists do, which is why they've taken advantage of nonprofits' potent tax exemption and weaponized IRS rules concerning charities to build a vast political network surrounding the Democratic Party composed of legions of activists, lawyers, strategists, and mega-donors all sharing one goal: the fundamental transformation of America. ◼

A "DARK MONEY" ASSAULT ON U.S. ELECTIONS

How One Billionaire's Private Foundation Is Influencing Our Elections From Bermuda

Summary: *Atlantic Philanthropies, a foreign entity based in Bermuda, has spent millions in "dark money" influencing American politics. Through funding Health Care for America Now, it is credited with almost single-handedly leading the campaign behind Congress's passage of Obamacare. Atlantic's latest venture is the Civic Participation Action Fund, with a five-year mission of using targeted voter registration to transform red states into bluish-purple toss-ups—leading to Democrats winning more seats in Congress and ultimately the presidency. The fund continues to fly under the radar of public attention while maintaining the appearance of nonpartisanship, and this deceptive behavior damages the American political discourse and indicates dubious intentions.*

In 2008, Atlantic Philanthropies, the Bermuda-based foundation created by left-wing billionaire Charles "Chuck" Feeney, quietly moved America toward socialized medicine.

Meet Atlantic Philanthropies

In 2008, Atlantic Philanthropies, the Bermuda-based foundation created by left-wing billionaire Charles "Chuck" Feeney, quietly moved America toward socialized medicine. From 2008 to 2010, Atlantic provided $27 million—over half of the organization's funding—to Health Care for America Now (HCAN). HCAN was so effective with Atlantic's money, that it's been credited with almost single-handedly leading the campaign behind Congress's passage of Obamacare. With just three years and $27 million, Atlantic orchestrated one of the largest policy shifts in American history, bringing one-sixth of the American economy under the influence of Uncle Sam.

> ❝
>
> *The Civic Participation Action Fund was designed as a five-year project, not a permanent organization, and it has accordingly been spending money like there is no tomorrow.*

Years later, the election of President Donald Trump in 2016 brought a radical shift of its own, undoing much of Atlantic's work. By repealing the individual mandate, which required all Americans to purchase health insurance or pay a tax penalty, the Trump Administration and Congress effectively gutted Obamacare.

But by then, Atlantic Philanthropies was already hatching a plan to push back against congressional Republicans and the Trump Administration: the Civic Participation Action Fund (CPAF), a 501(c)(4) organization founded in 2015. Over the years Atlantic has used its 501(c)(4) wing, the Atlantic Advocacy Fund, to provide a whopping $50 million to establish CPAF.

Parker Thayer is currently a junior at Hillsdale College. He served as an intern at Capital Research Center in summer 2019.

Operating under a nonpartisan guise, CPAF is a voter-mobilization mega-funder dedicated to ensuring Democrats control and retain control of Congress by 2020. Although it purports to promote "racial equity, economic opportunity, and democratic participation among low-income people of color through advocacy and civic engagement," CRC has uncovered documents demonstrating that behind this innocent sounding goal is a sophisticated plan to fund an army of left-wing activists determined to put Democrats in office.

Atlantic Unleashes an Ocean of Money

Federal laws bar private nonprofit foundations from engaging in anything resembling partisan activity, and that includes the Bermuda-based Atlantic Philanthropies. Atlantic can, however, further its political agenda by providing *unrestricted* funding to 501(c)(4) advocacy groups, which can lobby and engage in other political activities. On the other hand, any donations U.S.-based private foundations make to 501(c)(4)s *must be for demonstrably charitable purposes*. From its hideaway in Bermuda, Atlantic abuses this loophole extensively, using billions of tax-exempt dollars to support its left-wing political agenda.

But CPAF doesn't plan on sticking around to do so for very long. On its sparse website, CPAF writes that it is a "limited life initiative" dedicated to funding civic engagement efforts that are "[likely] to culminate in some degree of success by 2020." CPAF was designed as a five-year project, not a permanent organization, and it has accordingly been spending money like there is no tomorrow.

Between 2015 and 2017, CPAF gave over $20 million in grants exclusively to left-wing activist groups, almost all of which are either 501(c)(4)s or political action committees (PACs) in nearly a dozen different states. The states are from coast to coast, including Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Illinois, Georgia, North Carolina, and Florida.

CPAF-sponsored organizations include Mi Familia Vota, an open-borders group that submitted 6,000 voter registration forms that were rejected as ineligible or duplicates, according to Arizona officials. Another example is Every Citizen Counts, a left-wing voter engagement group created on behalf of Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign, to which CPAF granted $1.8 million in 2016. CPAF gave another $1.5 million to Immigrant Voters Win, a left-wing PAC funded mainly by billionaires George Soros and Tom Steyer.

Although it casts a wide net, CPAF is also generous with its resources. Often, CPAF grants account for more than a third of an organization's revenue. This allows CPAF to develop

Credit: atlanticphil. License: https://bit.ly/2UrydMT.

Stephen McConnell, the president of CPAF, worked as the director of U.S. Advocacy for Atlantic Philanthropies for several years and appears to be the driving force behind the CPAF program.

an allied network of organizations in dozens of states where it doesn't have a physical footprint. In addition to its state-based networks, CPAF is also a key player in national left-wing organizing through its ties to Arabella Advisors and the Democracy Alliance.

Left-wing billionaires such as George Soros, Herb Sandler, Rob Reiner, and Norman Lear formed the Democracy Alliance in 2004 as a secret organizing committee for all things left-wing in the United States. CPAF's IRS filings show that it makes an annual grant, likely membership dues, to the Democracy Alliance as well as dozens of grants to organizations that are part of the Democracy Alliance.

CPAF also gives to and receives funding from groups controlled by Arabella Advisors, the left-wing for-profit management group. As CRC's investigative researcher Hayden Ludwig exposed last year, Arabella Advisors is one of the Left's most secretive "dark money" organizations. Arabella manages over $1 billion per year through the four nonprofit entities it controls: Sixteen Thirty Fund, New Venture Fund, Hopewell Fund, and Windward Fund. In 2016, CPAF earmarked $280,000 to the Sixteen Thirty Fund for work to engage voters in Nevada.

CRC also obtained never-before-seen, unredacted copies of CPAF's IRS filings, which show that Arabella-led organizations provided over $1 million in funding to CPAF. In 2016, CPAF received $1.1 million from the 501(c)(4) Sixteen Thirty Fund and $367,000 from the 501(c)(3) New Venture Fund. Also on the list of 2016 contributions is $1 million from the NEO Philanthropy Action Fund—a massive left-wing, dark money pass-through entity—and $367,000 from

George Soros's Open Society Foundations. Although these contributions are small compared to those from Atlantic, they show that CPAF is collaborating with and influencing left-wing leadership at the highest levels.

CPAF's unredacted 2017 filings also reveal that CPAF receives support from liberal tech elites in Silicon Valley including $50,000 from Paul Graham, co-founder of Y Combinator, a company that provided seed investing for Dropbox and Airbnb; $50,000 from the Conway Family Trust, created by Ron Conway (a founding investor in Google and well-known left-winger); and $10,000 from Michael Yang (a tech investor who helped found Yahoo). These contributions suggest that these three billionaires know their way around the innermost circles of left-wing organizing, potentially exposing them as secret members of the Democracy Alliance.

Clearly, CPAF is a large and sophisticated operation that has rapidly spread its influence to left-wing operations across the country, and it would take a team of highly skilled organizers to operate it. Luckily, Atlantic knew exactly the right people for the job, due to its long history of secret left-wing activism.

Meet the Team

To help put its vision into action, Atlantic Philanthropies recruited a team of highly skilled left-wing operatives, many of whom had worked with Atlantic Philanthropies before.

Stephen McConnell, President. Stephen McConnell, the president of CPAF, worked as the director of U.S. Advocacy for Atlantic Philanthropies for several years and appears to be the driving force behind the CPAF program.

A truly well-connected force in the world of left-wing policy and thought, McConnell has a Ph.D. in sociology and is a member of the boards of both Demos, a major left-wing think tank, and U.S. Justice Action Network, a left-wing policy research group. McConnell appeared in a short video announcing CPAF's launch that calls other funders to join Atlantic in funding voter-mobilization efforts. In 2015, McConnell also published an opinion in the *Chronicle of Philanthropy* urging other funders to partner in CPAF's work because "[they] should decry lack of progress more than [they] fear the spotlight of controversy."

Bill Roberts, Director. Bill Roberts, a director at CPAF, heads the Corridor Partners, a left-wing political consultancy firm. Roberts, like McConnell, is a former director of U.S. Advocacy for Atlantic, but also has extensive experience outside Atlantic. Although primarily a consultant, Roberts is on the board of

the League of Conservation Voters, where he spent many years as the board chairman. Atlantic likely invited Roberts back to be the brains of CPAF's operations because of his long history of work in left-wing voter mobilization.

Katharine Peck, Senior Vice President. Katharine Peck, the most important and recent addition to the team, appears to oversee the on-the-ground efforts of CPAF via her leadership positions at numerous nonprofits dedicated to expanding state-level activism. Peck is the president of State Voices, a multistate organizing group that runs "state civic engagement tables" that bring scattered left-wing activism groups together to develop and coordinate their efforts. In this way State Voices, a well-known member of Democracy Alliance, creates miniature versions of Democracy Alliance wherever it operates. CPAF provides grants largely to groups connected to these state civic engagement tables. Peck's inside knowledge of the State Voices network is likely what helped CPAF quickly identify groups that could carry out CPAF's work as if it were truly "grassroots." Peck is also on the board of several other voter engagement nonprofits, including the Voter Registration Project and the Advancement Project.

Peck joined CPAF's board in 2016 when the group's operations shifted into gear. In 2015, CPAF gave out just over $1 million in grants, but after Peck joined the board, it handed out over $12 million, perhaps guided by Peck's expert input. Peck's only previous work for a private foundation was as an advisor to the Gill Foundation, the private foundation of Tim Gill that focuses on LBGTQ activism. However, her starting salary of $300,000 was the same as McConnell, who had worked with Atlantic for years.

Credit: Steve Rhodes. License: https://bit.ly/2SmkXGz.

CPAF director Phil Schiliro worked as director of congressional relations for the Obama administration. He has been credited with playing a substantial role in wrangling legislators together to support Obamacare.

Philip Schiliro, Director. CPAF director Phil Schiliro worked as director of congressional relations for the Obama administration and was considered an expert in legislative affairs and congressional relations. He has been credited with playing a substantial role in wrangling legislators together to support Obamacare. His deep personal relationships with nearly every Democrat in Congress and to Democratic National Committee (DNC) leadership likely help CPAF coordinate efforts with the DNC and Democratic candidates.

Whitney Tymas, Director. Whitney Tymas is a prominent lawyer who has worked extensively in criminal justice reform at the left-leaning Vera Institute for Justice. He currently is the treasurer for the Safety and Justice PAC and works for the Justice and Public Safety PAC. Both PACs receive millions in funding every year from George Soros. The Open Society Institute's $367,000 donation to CPAF in 2016 suggests that Soros has partnered with Atlantic to fund CPAF's work, and Tymas was likely placed on the board to oversee operation on behalf of Soros, with whom CPAF has been claimed to be working.

David Sternlieb, Secretary. David Sternlieb, CPAF's secretary, oversees Atlantic's global programs during the final phase of grantmaking. On his orders, Atlantic plans to spend itself out of existence by 2020, and Sternlieb's job is to make it happen. His role on the CPAF board seems to be solely oversight, making sure that CPAF's work complies with Atlantic's mission.

Is There More to CPAF?

In many respects, CPAF is unique in the world of philanthropy, yet its level of funding suggests that something has suddenly made Atlantic very confident in CPAF's abilities and tactics. Such confidence in the middle of virtually uncharted waters almost certainly means that Atlantic knows something everyone else doesn't.

The Capital Research Center's investigative team discovered a handful of unassuming emails released by WikiLeaks that provide the final piece in the puzzle, allowing researchers to begin to understand the source of CPAF's unusual confidence. As it turns out, the story doesn't begin with CPAF or even with Atlantic Philanthropies. Rather, the story begins with a cryptic email from the president of *another* private foundation to John Podesta.

Credit: Center for American Progress. License: https://bit.ly/2xASxQW.

As it turns out, the story doesn't begin with CPAF or even with Atlantic Philanthropies. Rather, the story begins with a cryptic email from the president of another private foundation to John Podesta.

In February 2015, Molly McUsic, president of the Wyss Foundation, emailed John Podesta who was then Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign director. The Wyss Foundation is the private foundation of Hansjörg Wyss, a left-wing Swiss billionaire who made his fortune as the president of a controversial medical technologies company called Synthes USA. Wyss's foundation largely focuses on environmental activism but also provides broad support for left-wing policy in the United States.

McUsic's message to Podesta was just three words long: "New c3 version." Underneath, McUsic attached an email that outlined a plan for a massive voter-registration program, designed specifically for nonprofit groups.

> " *Molly McUsic's message to Podesta was just three words long: "New c3 version."*

Political consultant Bill Roberts sent the original email—*the same Bill Roberts who is now on the CPAF board.*

Roberts wrote to McUsic, "As we discussed, I am attaching a set of recommendations for large-scale, multi-year voter registration programs focused on historically underrepresented populations." This proves that Roberts had been shopping a voter-registration plan that sounds a lot like CPAF to other left-wing private foundations around the time of CPAF's launch.

Later, Roberts insisted that his program was "designed to meet this goal in a strictly nonpartisan manner, consistent with the mission of any private foundation." This clearly hints that it was designed specifically for 501(c)(3)s, not 501(c)(4)s such as CPAF, but Roberts also states that he

needed to make "notable changes from earlier versions" of the plan to make it acceptable for 501(c)(3) groups to use. Together, McUsic's "new c3 version" message and Robert's presence on the board of CPAF seem to indicate that Bill Roberts' plan was the original inspiration for CPAF.

Unmasking CPAF's Deceptively Partisan Origins

Along with his email to the Wyss Foundation, Bill Roberts attached both a Microsoft Word document and a PDF of the voter-registration plan, but in doing so Roberts made a mistake: He forgot to turn off the "Track Changes" function and accept all the changes. Track Changes records every edit to a document and which user made it so that a reader can see the differences between the original and edited versions. This means that we can see all the "notable changes" Roberts made to his plan before he sent it to the Wyss Foundation. And the tracked changes reveal an entire arsenal of tactics that left-wing nonprofits use to conceal partisan intentions behind walls of philanthropy and intentionally milquetoast words such as "civic engagement."

To make his project compliant for 501(c)(3) nonprofits, Roberts consistently softened or removed partisan language throughout the document.

The first important change was in the introduction, where Roberts edited the plan to mask the program's focus on a set of *desired political outcomes*, not just blanket civic participation among minorities. Note that in the quotations below deletions are shown in ~~red strikethrough~~; insertions are shown in <u>green underline</u>.

> Although much more work is needed to flesh out a full plan, particularly on the important challenge of program implementation, the quantitative analysis is intriguing and the potential ~~political~~ <u>voter participation</u> outcomes <u>are</u> enormous.

This shows that Corridor Partners' plan viewed voter participation as merely the means to a political end. This edit alone shows that the plan is nowhere near as altruistic as it pretends.

Further along, in a summary of the potential political outcomes, are more illuminating changes:

> . . . if it were fully implemented at the scale suggested by our experts' analysis, the program has the potential to impact policies affecting millions of citizens and ~~guide hundreds of billions of dollars~~

~~in government funding into environment, health, energy, and other initiatives.~~

Roberts struck any mention of funneling "hundreds of billions of dollars in government funding" toward furthering the left-wing agenda. While most nonprofits duck and dodge when accused of supporting the left-wing agenda, this edit paints CPAF into a corner.

After explaining his goals, Roberts tips his hand further, revealing that he intends to produce results for one specific political party. In its original format, the document included three example elections in which their program could have hypothetically made a difference:

> Voter participation by people of color has improved somewhat in recent years, but their continued absence from the political process has almost certainly had a <u>skewed</u> impact on <u>both</u> elections <u>and policy</u>. ~~Here are three illustrative examples from recent elections:~~

All three example elections were races where Republicans won by a thin margin: the 2012 Senate races in Nevada and Arizona and the 2010 Florida governor's race. Corridor's report originally claimed that, if their program had been enacted, new voters at the polls could "potentially [alter] the outcome of the race." Just like the rest of the partisan language in the report, Roberts removed it.

The edits underneath the high-minded language about promoting civic engagement show CPAF's funders cared specifically about influencing elections and picking candidates. Roberts noted the possibility that his project could promote public policy changes—something that 501(c)(3) organizations *are* allowed to do—but only as an after-thought to give the program the appearance of nonpartisanship.

In a summary of the plan's methodology, Roberts made the following change:

> Academic research confirms that voter interest, particularly for low propensity voters, is closely tied to the ~~outcome~~ <u>competitiveness</u> of an election.

This again demonstrates that the purpose of the "registration surge" is to influence the outcome of elections, something that 501(c)(3) entities are expressly forbidden from doing.

Just as interesting as the things that Bill Roberts *did* change are the things that he *didn't*.

Although he trimmed the partisan language of the original, the main body of his work remains entirely

> *The edits underneath the high-minded language about promoting civic engagement show CPAF's funders cared specifically about influencing elections and picking candidates.*

unchanged, including the recommendations, costs, statistics, and sources.

The crux of Robert's plan appears at the end of the document: a detailed spending table organized by state and year, designed to produce the best results. It centers on eight key states: Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina, New Mexico, and Nevada—all CPAF target states.

Also in Table 1 is the final price tag and duration of the project. The minimum estimated cost of the whole project is just over $100 million from 2015 to 2020—CPAF's stated lifespan. So far, CPAF has received roughly $50 million in grants, precisely half of the project's total cost. CPAF's state grantmaking is also consistent with Table 1 in both 2016 and 2017. For example, some of the recommendations for 2016 include directing roughly 15 percent of funding to

Table 1. Bill Robert's Spending Table

Target Type	State	Costs						
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
States Where Vote Margin Can Be Closed Through Voter Registration Alone	Arizona	$1,406,076	$4,030,517	$1,541,382	$4,452,370	$1,537,239	$4,406,457	$17,374,042
	Colorado	$708,705	$2,031,344	$709,327	$2,048,932	$690,105	$1,978,041	$8,166,454
	Florida	$2,042,469	$5,845,677	$2,293,843	$6,625,895	$0	$0	$16,807,884
	Georgia	$1,474,680	$4,208,870	$1,623,019	$4,688,182	$1,767,502	$5,044,091	$18,806,345
	Illinois	$1,724,698	$4,936,744	$1,802,187	$5,205,718	$1,804,043	$5,163,448	$20,636,839
	North Carolina	$755,015	$2,153,791	$883,518	$2,552,093	$942,599	$2,690,462	$9,977,477
	New Mexico	$594,253	$1,702,462	$587,198	$1,696,155	$579,114	$1,658,887	$6,818,069
	Nevada	$500,156	$1,431,402	$518,530	$1,497,804	$556,908	$1,594,964	$6,099,764
	Total	**$9,206,052**	**$26,340,807**	**$9,959,006**	**$28,767,148**	**$7,877,510**	**$22,536,350**	**$104,686,873**

Table 2. Estimated Net Votes Generated in 2020 Election, by State and by Race and Ethnicity

State	African American	Hispanic American	Asian American	Other Non-White	Total Non-White	Vote Margin
Arizona	18,750	133,584	26,981	19,321	**198,635**	153,657
Colorado	13,219	59,779	15,846	3,989	**92,832**	67,520
Connecticut	18,837	17,831	8,460	2,595	**47,722**	87,281
Florida	51,666	83,860	27,713	9,444	**172,684**	110,701
Georgia	144,931	31,969	29,057	12,531	**218,487**	216,431
Illinois	94,483	104,866	33,684	3,219	**236,252**	149,779
North Carolina	72,498	21,214	6,880	15,485	**116,077**	74,926
New Mexico	3,411	53,904	2,438	17,872	**77,626**	53,381
Nevada	11,570	40,580	7,419	10,529	**70,099**	51,246
Pennsylvania	75,129	49,086	12,918	20,036	**157,168**	270,071
South Carolina	64,000	4,753	3,043	5,321	**77,116**	151,305
Texas	140,208	644,360	53,016	24,220	**861,804**	946,241
Virginia	26,974	10,354	15,272	6,828	**59,427**	111,566

Arizona, 22 percent to Florida, 7 percent to North Carolina, and 5 percent to New Mexico. An analysis of the organizations CPAF made grants to during 2016 shows nearly identical percentages of its funding were directed toward each of these key states, and similar trends were observed in 2017 as well.

The projected numbers of votes generated by the program also remain untouched, methodically separated by race and totaled under "Total Non-White" votes. The 2018 projections estimate that the program would generate nearly 1 million new "non-white" votes; 293,000 from African Americans and 520,000 from Hispanic-Americans. The 2020 projections, shown in Table 2, anticipate more than doubling the 2018 numbers to an estimated 2.4 million new votes by 2020.

Was CPAF Successful?

Partisan schemes and $50 million dark money operations certainly peak interest and ignite fury, but the most important thing to know is whether CPAF's covert plan is proving successful after operating for over four years.

Although attributing the "blue wave" of 2018 entirely to Atlantic's efforts would be foolish, the amount of money used and the projected number of votes gained suggest that CPAF played a substantial role. In 2018, Democrats regained the House, and *one-third* of the seats that Democrats flipped to gain control of the House were in CPAF's target states. Most of the other seats were in red districts in deep-blue states such as California or New York. This was by no means the sole result of CPAF's work and was caused by a multitude of political factors, but several of these districts had been long-standing Republican strongholds. By 2018, many of these districts had developed a purple hue, suggesting that CPAF had been highly effective at closing the narrow "vote margin" separating Democrats from victory.

The states where CPAF began operating in 2015 were all battleground states when the 2018 elections began, and several had some of the most contentious elections of the year, such as the hotly contested Arizona senate race. CPAF-backed groups spent large sums supporting Democratic candidate Kyrsten Sinema, who barely edged out her Republican opponent to become the first Democratic senator in Arizona since 1988. Arizona Wins, a 501(c)(4)

group, received $600,000 from CPAF in 2017—half of its revenue—and spent tens of thousands supporting Sinema's campaign and attacking Governor Doug Ducey.

CPAF also played a crucial role in Florida's senate and governor's races. Florida election records indicate that during 2018, CPAF and left-wing billionaire Donald Sussman simultaneously gave $200,000 each to a PAC known as Florida for All. Just two days later, Florida for All gave $400,000 to the Florida Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee (DLCC), which spent millions on TV ads and endorsements for Democratic candidates in Florida during 2018. Back in 2016, Florida for All ran a vitriolic smear campaign against Republican Governor Rick Scott and hosted "#ShadyRick" protests outside his campaign events.

> *Atlantic's siege on American elections is nearing its end, and based on the numbers Bill Roberts projected for 2020, the final battle this year will not be pretty.*

During 2018, the Florida DLCC also supported Democratic campaigns for state offices with media buys and flocks of paid canvassers, gaining Democrats five seats in the Florida state house, unseating three Republican incumbents, and one seat in the state senate.

As part of its voter-registration work, CPAF also funded several successful left-wing ballot initiatives such as a Colorado ballot measure in 2016 that aimed to raise the minimum wage to $12 an hour by 2020. The group behind the measure, Colorado Families for a Fair Wage, received $700,000 from CPAF in 2016. The measure passed. Afterwards the Colorado Attorney General's office opened an official investigation into Colorado Families for a Fair Wage for fraud. In 2016, CPAF also funded an identical minimum wage law in Arizona with a $350,000 donation to Arizonans for Fair Wages and Healthy Families.

In fact, each of the states where CPAF has been working experienced a localized blue wave. Between them, well over 60 seats in state legislatures across the country flipped blue, many held by long-standing Republican incumbents or independents. Meanwhile, Republicans made zero net gains in these states and often barely maintained control of their existing seats. Although CPAF shouldn't get all of the credit, the Bill Roberts' plan *was* designed to transform red states into bluish-purple toss-ups, and the unusually close results of the 2018 elections suggest that this happened.

Atlantic's siege on American elections is nearing its end, and based on the numbers Bill Roberts projected for 2020, the final battle this year will not be pretty.

Phony Philanthropy

For years, Atlantic Philanthropies, a foreign entity, spent millions in dark money as part of a sophisticated effort to influence U.S. elections. But if you were to ask pundits or politicians on the Left about CPAF's dark money tactics, you would likely be met with confused stares. Perhaps, if you pointed them to CPAF's extremely vague website, they might find CPAF's claims that it does not fund "overtly partisan" projects and assume that this is the truth. CPAF continues to fly under the radar of public attention while maintaining the appearance of nonpartisanship, and this deceptive behavior damages the American political discourse and indicates dubious intentions.

Indeed, the documents authored and doctored by Bill Roberts confirm this reality, which neither CPAF nor the Left is willing to acknowledge. Despite CPAF's overwhelmingly partisan work, its website still claims that it does not fund "overtly partisan" efforts. And CPAF president Stephen McConnell even defended that claim in an article in *Bloomberg News.* McConnell's assertion is blatantly false. Now that the truth is clear, it is important to continue peeling back the "nonpartisan" disguises that permeate all levels of left-wing activism.

In fact, using tactics like CPAF's, the entire landscape of left-wing nonprofit groups championing "civic engagement" and "voter participation" secretly functions as extra-party political machines. But when conservative nonprofits engage in similar tactics the media suddenly declares an open season.

For example, The Libre Initiative, a right-leaning "civic engagement" group styled after its left-wing counterparts, advocates for conservative policies within the Hispanic community. For years Libre has helped register and mobilize scores of conservative Hispanic voters. By doing so Libre became the target of unceasing attacks from the Left. Source Watch, the left-leaning watchdog website, categorizes Libre as a "Latino front group" for Charles and David Koch. The *LA Times, Washington Post,* Huffington Post, Right-Wing Watch, and other outlets published scathing articles berating Libre for "[attempting] to make its public face one of community service and outreach." It would be very difficult to find a better description of CPAF, which operates on a much larger scale than Libre ever has. ∎
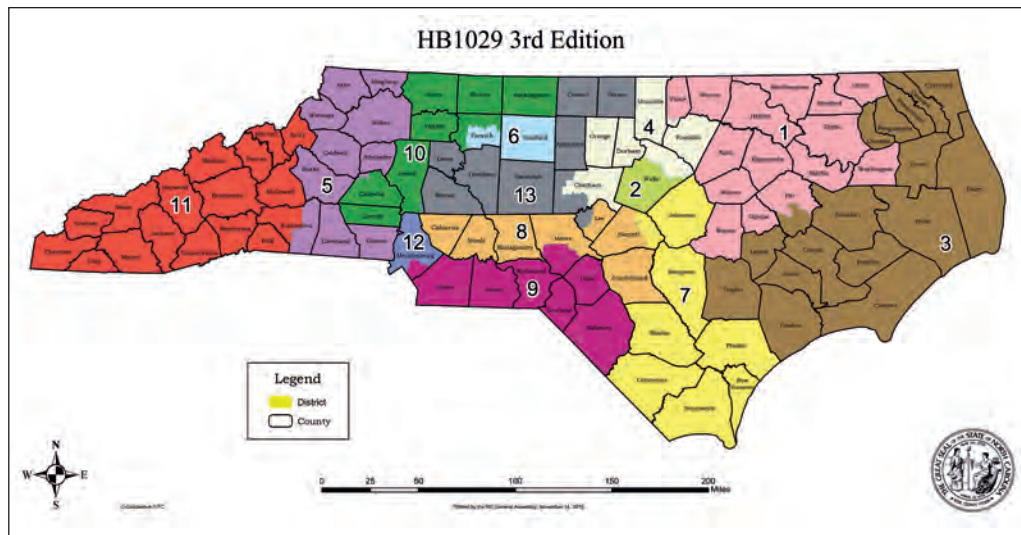
TURNING NORTH CAROLINA BLUE

Summary: *Of all the states up for grabs in the coming presidential election, perhaps none is the center of more bare-knuckle brawling between Republicans and Democrats than North Carolina. At stake is more than the Tar Heel State's 15 electoral votes, but the integrity of the country's elections. If the Left gets its way, North Carolina could be transformed into a "Progressive" stronghold for years to come.*

Credit: North Carolina State Congress. License: https://bit.ly/3hD22mh.

Boundaries for U.S. congressional districts in North Carolina, 2021–2023.
Few states are more important than North Carolina in the 2020 presidential election and the 2020 Census, both of which will shape America's political landscape for years to come.

Few states are more important than North Carolina in the 2020 presidential election and the 2020 Census, both of which will shape America's political landscape for years to come.

Once a solidly Republican stronghold, Barack Obama won the Tar Heel State in 2008 by 14,000 votes, the first Democrat to do so since Jimmy Carter in 1976. While Mitt Romney retook the state and its 15 electoral votes in 2012 and 2016, leaders in both parties consider it up for grabs in 2020. That makes it one of the fiercest battlegrounds this year as outside groups pour tens of millions of dollars into its high-profile races for the presidency, the governorship, the state legislature, and Congress.

To the victor go the spoils—which is why Democrats and a vast network of allied political action committees (PACs) and nonprofits are working to build a left-wing infrastructure that could flip North Carolina permanently blue. The Left's plan has three steps:

1. Increase the count of traditionally Democratic-voting constituencies in the 2020 Census,

2. Boost voter turnout of Democratic-leaning constituencies in 2020 to gain a Democratic majority in the state legislature, and

3. Control the 2021 redistricting process to ensure favorable congressional districts for Democrats running for Congress.

Compared with other battleground states such as Pennsylvania, North Carolina has a firm Republican majority in the state senate and house. But conservatives shouldn't rest on their laurels. In 2018, Democrats wrestled away six seats in the state senate and nine seats in the house—reducing Republican majorities from 35 to 29 in the senate and from 74 to 65 in the house. A sweep like that in 2020 could put the GOP in the minority for the first time in over a decade.

It's a similar plan to that of left-wing groups across the nation trying to sweep away fragile Republican majorities in state legislatures, a critical step to controlling the congressional redistricting process nationwide.

The Constitution mandates that all 435 congressional districts be reapportioned among the states based on popu-

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lation and redrawn as needed by state legislatures after each census, held every ten years. According to the latest estimates, ten states—Alabama, California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and West Virginia—will likely lose a seat in the House of Representatives. Seven other states, including Texas and Florida, will each gain seats.

North Carolina will likely gain an additional seat in the House after the 2020 Census, bringing its total to 14. And because state legislative districts are also redrawn following the census, the stakes couldn't be higher for the party in power to draw favorable maps that will be in place until the next census in 2030.

Manipulating the 2020 Census

Census data about how the American population has changed over the past decade are collected by the U.S. Census Bureau through mail-in forms, online surveys, and in-person interviews. Besides determining how the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned among the states, that data also heavily influence how some $675 billion in federal funding is spent.

Getting an accurate census count is important, but the Census Bureau's resources are limited. And there are pressing questions: The bureau counts legal non-citizens, but should it count illegal aliens as well? Counting them will give states with large populations of illegal immigrants—such as California and Florida—an unfair advantage over states with no illegal aliens when congressional seats are apportioned and subsequently drawn.

Michael Gonzalez, a Heritage Foundation senior fellow and census expert, explains:

> Basing voting districts on total population dilutes the vote of citizens. **The vote of a citizen in a district with many non-citizens will count for more than the vote of a citizen in a district with very few non-citizens.** The Supreme Court again said, this time in the decision in *Reynolds v. Sims*, "To the extent that a citizen's right to vote is debased, **he is that much less a citizen**" [emphasis added].

Should the main census form include a citizenship question? The Trump administration thought so and planned on including one in 2020. He had precedent on his side: A citizenship question was included in every census since the presidency of James Monroe until 2000, when it was moved to the separate American Community Survey.

So how does one tilt the census to the left? Count the people who predominantly vote Democratic, and don't count the people who typically vote for the other party.

Leftists cried foul, calling the intent behind reintroducing a citizenship question "racist" and claiming it was added to "rig the results to benefit 'Republicans and Non-Hispanic Whites.'" In late 2018, liberal state attorneys general launched a salvo of lawsuits to block the question with aid from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO). After months of unsuccessful legal battles, the Trump administration abandoned the citizenship question in July 2019.

So how does one tilt the census to the left? Count the people who predominantly vote Democratic, and don't count the people who typically vote for the other party.

In North Carolina, that means pumping up the number of people counted in the Democratic strongholds of Charlotte, Fayetteville, Raleigh, and Greensboro, while ignoring rural areas, which typically vote Republican.

This is possible because the IRS allows 501(c)(3) nonprofits to "help" the Census Bureau gather data, something it considers a charitable (and therefore tax-exempt) act. It's legally similar to registering people to vote: 501(c)(3) groups may engage in it so long as they don't do so in a partisan matter (e.g., registering only voters who plan to vote Democratic or telling them how to vote).

The Left has *dozens* of groups that do nothing but voter registration and census counting. They even have a name for it: GOTC, or get out the count, which sounds suspiciously like the get-out-the-vote (GOTV) work normally done by politicians running for office. As far as anyone can tell, scores of leftist GOTC groups, but no conservative or Republican nonprofits, have taken the field in key battleground states. It's a one-sided race—and Left is winning.

Census Counts

One such group trying to tilt the census is Census Counts, which virtuously describes itself as a "collaborative campaign" of 60 organizations "working together to make sure

that the 2020 Census is fair and accurate." But fairness is not its goal; the group is a front for the decidedly left-wing Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. The Leadership Conference has been pushing a social justice agenda for 70 years and was a key litigator in the lawsuit demanding that the Trump administration remove the citizenship question from the 2020 Census.

Census Counts publishes a state-by-state list of local affiliates, all of which coordinate with the national headquarters on their census strategy. NC Counts Coalition, its North Carolina affiliate, offers paid training to become enumerators—official census data collectors—who "can go out into their communities and inform others about the importance of completing the census."

Census data about how the American population has changed over the past decade are collected by the U.S. Census Bureau through mail-in forms, online surveys, and in-person interviews. Besides determining how the 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives are apportioned among the states, that data also heavily influence how some $675 billion in federal funding is spent.

NC Counts Coalition is clear on its census target demographics:

- Young children under age 6
- Hispanic or Latinx individuals
- Native Americans
- Black or African Americans
- Migrant populations
- Renters

The group even published an 11-page pamphlet entitled "The Statewide Implications of Undercounting Latino Children."

Blueprint North Carolina

Then there's Blueprint NC, part of State Voices, one of the most influential groups coordinating the Left's redistricting strategy nationwide. State Voices was formed after the Democrats' defeat in the 2004 election, with the goal of crafting permanent left-wing infrastructure in battleground states. Consequently, it's one of the Democracy Alliance's "recommended organizations," meaning the elite funders' collective considers State Voices a key group for all its 2020 efforts—and its funding proves it. Since its creation, State Voices has received $43 million in grants from the George Soros's Open Society, Ford, and Tides Foundations—to name a few.

State Voices isn't shy about its objectives: "The two pillars of our civic representation work are the 2020 Census and fair redistricting in 2021." The officially "nonpartisan" group plays up traditionally Democratic-leaning constituencies in GOTC activities ahead of the 2020 Census. Between 2016 and 2017 State Voices paid out almost $6 million in grants to its affiliated voter/census turnout groups in battleground states (e.g., Blueprint NC, Minnesota Voice, and Pennsylvania Voice) and constituencies, particularly Latinos (through Mi Familia Vota). Those groups in turn trickle part of their funding down to their own network of in-state activists and use the rest to push likely Democratic voters to support redistricting and the census.

Blueprint NC is a convening hub for a sprawling list of local "partners" sharing the same 2020 strategy. Notables include the Fair Elections Center, Democracy NC, LEAD NC, and Progress North Carolina. Far from being independent grassroots groups, these well-funded organizations are working in tandem to help Democrats win big in 2020.

According to Mapping the Left (a website run by the conservative Civitas Institute), Blueprint NC was founded by a who's who of North Carolina leftists, including representatives from the state's Planned Parenthood affiliate, Democracy NC, NC Justice Center, and the local League of Conservation Voters branch. A glance at Blueprint NC's website reveals how far left its current leadership is. Its executive director is Serena Sebring, a community organizer and self-described "queer Black feminist, mother, organizer, and educator." The group's board of directors includes representatives from nine left-wing state activist groups, including the Southern Coalition for Racial Justice, the NC Public Service Workers Union, and Action NC.

The group's top donors are two North Carolina grantmakers, the Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, which founded Blueprint NC in 2006. Blueprint NC has also received hundreds of thou-

sands of dollars from George Soros's Foundation to Promote Open Society. One Soros grant for $225,000 in 2016 leaves little to the imagination: "To build and strengthen collaboration and civic engagement capacity in North Carolina." The phrase "civic engagement capacity" is a euphemism for get out the vote.

Blueprint NC is cagey about its census and GOTV operations in 2020, and it isn't hard to see why. In 2015, the group made an embarrassing blunder when a strategy memo leaked detailing the group's cynical game plan to "Eviscerate, Mitigate, Litigate, Cogitate, and Agitate." Excerpts from the *Charlotte Observer* include:

> "Crippling their leaders (McCrory, Tillis, Berger etc.)."

> "Eviscerate the leadership and weaken their ability to govern."

> "Pressure McCrory at every public event."

> "Slam him when he contradicts his promises."

> "Private investigators and investigative reporting, especially in the executive branch."

But Blueprint NC almost had the last laugh. In 2018, the group accused Republicans of suppressing the votes of minorities in that year's midterm election, co-hosting an election fraud meeting in Bladensboro with the NAACP and allied groups to accuse Republicans of "stealing our votes." That culminated in seven indictments of Republican political operatives charged with ballot harvesting—taking voters' absentee ballots and failing to mail them—to help the campaign of Rep. Mark Harris (NC-09), who won reelection by a scant 905 votes against Democrat Dan McCready.

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Democracy NC's primary goal is breaking down voter integrity laws.

Harris declined to run again in the special election ordered by the North Carolina State Board of Elections amid the fallout from the scandal, citing medical issues. However, it didn't seem to damage the GOP credibility in the district because Republican Dan Bishop beat McCready in the special election in September by roughly 3,800 votes.

Supporting Blueprint's effort is Democracy North Carolina, a litigation group often portrayed by the media as a neutral actor but which is little more than an extension of the

network funded by the Reynolds family foundations. It was formed in 1991 as Democracy South, an extension of the Institute for Southern Studies, which is a leftist agitation group co-founded by Julian Bond, who also co-founded the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Democracy NC's primary goal is breaking down voter integrity laws. It adamantly opposed the voter ID law added to the North Carolina constitution by ballot measure in the 2018 election after it passed with 55 percent of the vote. The NAACP launched a lawsuit to overturn the new requirement, and the state Supreme Court ultimately struck down the voter ID law as unconstitutional in December 2019. As a consequence, no photo ID was needed to vote in North Carolina's primary in March 2020 and won't be required in the November general election.

The Redistricting Process in North Carolina

The redistricting process—when every state redraws its congressional and legislative maps—will start in early 2021, when the Census Bureau releases its data to the states. Just *how* North Carolina will draw its 13 congressional districts (14 if it gains one in the census) and 170 legislative districts will be determined by whichever party controls the state legislature after the 2020 election. (Unlike some states, North Carolina's governor can't veto the legislature's maps and so plays a much smaller role.)

Redistricting has some basic rules. According to state law, districts must be contiguous, should attempt to adhere to county lines, and should take into consideration "communities of interest." However, the 2020 process differs the 2010 process in one critical way: North Carolina no longer needs to obtain federal "preclearance" to put its plans in place.

To keep states from infringing on Americans' voting rights (particularly the rights of blacks in the South), Section 5 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act required certain states to preclear their redistricting plans with the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure they do not discriminate against minorities. In North Carolina, 40 of 100 counties were such "covered jurisdictions." Section 5 was always meant to be temporary—hence, the provision required congressional reauthorization every five years—but it had effectively become a permanent condition for most Southern states.

That changed in 2013, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 against Attorney General Eric Holder in *Shelby County v. Holder* that conditions had changed in Shelby County, Alabama, such that Section 5 no longer applied. In a nutshell, the racial discrimination of the 1960s was simply no

longer true 50 years later. Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in his opinion:

> If Congress had started from scratch in 2006, it plainly could not have enacted the present coverage formula. **It would have been irrational for Congress to distinguish between States in such a fundamental way** [as the Voting Rights Act did] based on 40-year-old data, **when today's statistics tell an entirely different story.** And it would have been irrational to base coverage on the use of voting tests 40 years ago, when such tests have been illegal since that time. But that is exactly what Congress has done [emphasis added].

Yet while conservatives celebrated the decision, liberals were aghast. The Brennan Center for Justice wrote that *Shelby County* "opened the floodgates to laws restricting voting throughout the United States." The *New York Times* characterized the decision as the culmination of a 50-year effort by Republicans "to undercut or dismantle [the] most important requirements" of the Voting Rights Act. *The Atlantic* didn't hold back in a piece entitled, "How *Shelby County v. Holder* Broke America," charging the Supreme Court with "set[ting] the stage for a new era of white hegemony."

In reality, the *Shelby County* decision enabled states like North Carolina to implement voting integrity laws that likely otherwise would not have gotten past Attorney General Eric Holder's rigidly left-wing Justice Department, including voter ID requirements and purging rolls of voters who hadn't voted in six consecutive years and failed to confirm their residency.

Holder's War

The litigation war to reshape America's congressional districts to suit the Democrats is being coordinated by Eric Holder, President Barack Obama's former attorney general and an overt partisan.

Holder is not the face of honest politics. In 2012, 17 Democrats joined the House Republican majority in holding the attorney general in contempt of Congress for refusing to turn over documents related to the Fast and Furious scandal, a law enforcement operation intended to dismantle Mexican drug cartels, which instead put some 2,000 guns into the criminals' hands. Holder called the vote "politically motivated."

During his tenure, conservative critics of the self-described "activist attorney general" charged him with politicizing the Justice Department by ignoring Democratic voter intimidation cases and hiring only committed leftists to the civil service.

In 2017, Eric Holder launched the National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC) with the declaration that Republicans' "extreme partisan gerrymandering" in states they controlled left Congress "broken."

Holder may be the ultimate Washington insider. He held a lucrative job at the mega-lobbying firm Covington & Burling from 2001 until he was sworn in as attorney general in February 2009. After leaving office in 2015, he immediately returned as a partner in the firm, which literally kept an empty office waiting for him, according to one report. Liberal *Rolling Stone* called him a "Wall Street Double Agent" for cashing in on the $2.5 million partnership immediately after leaving public service. And he's still listed as a partner at Covington & Burling.

He has also launched a second career as the Democrats' top gerrymandering litigator. Gerrymandering is drawing districts that unfairly favor one political party over another—for example, confining urban voters to a single district to ensure they vote for a Democrat and freeing up more districts for Republican-voting suburban and rural areas. It's named for Elbridge Gerry, vice president under President James Madison, who as a Massachusetts legislator famously drew long, snakelike congressional districts that one political cartoonist likened to a salamander—hence "gerrymander."

In 2017, Holder launched the National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC) with the declaration that Republicans' "extreme partisan gerrymandering" in states they controlled left Congress "broken." That Democrats have gerrymandered states they controlled was conveniently overlooked. "This creates a Congress driven by primary party politics and ideological extremism," he wrote, "not one accountable to the will of the majority of voters."

Yet accountability has little to do with it. NDRC's goal is to elect Democrats to legislatures in battleground states in time for the 2021 redistricting process, gerrymandering them into oblivion, and ensuring his party's dominance for the next decade. It even calls itself the Democrats' "strategic hub for a comprehensive redistricting strategy." Its stated goal in the organizational forms filed with the IRS is: "To build a comprehensive plan to favorably position Democrats for the redistricting process through 2022."

In his 2017 launch speech, Holder listed three NDRC goals:

1. Get Democrats elected to state legislatures in order to redraw congressional maps,
2. "Reform" the redistricting process with California-like citizens' commissions, and
3. Litigate away Republican-drawn congressional maps.

The NDRC has set its sights on 12 states where Republicans either have a strong legislative majority (Texas) or face tough competition from Democrats (North Carolina) in 2020. It's particularly interested in breaking trifectas—states where Republicans control both houses of the legislature and the governorship—guaranteeing Democrats a stronger place in the redistricting process.

NDRC is supported by former President Obama, whose presidential campaign-turned-activist group, Organizing for Action (formerly "Obama for America"), merged with the NDRC in 2019—gifting it the formidable list of donors, supporters, and volunteers built by the Obama campaigns over more than a decade. Now dubbed "All on the Line" and under the NDRC's leadership, the combined groups have targeted ten states with lawsuits to influence redistricting to favor the Left in what Obama called an "opportunity to bend the great arc of history toward justice."

The NDRC is composed of three groups, each chaired by Holder: the NDRC PAC, which supports Democrats running for Congress; the National Redistricting Action Fund, a 501(c)(4) that lobbies for state ballot measures supporting redistricting "reforms"; and the National Redistricting Foundation, a 501(c)(3) that litigates against Republican-drawn maps. (These kinds of networks are common, since each organization takes advantage of the peculiar laws governing 501(c)(3) and 501(c)(4) groups and PACs to advance a single cause.)

In 2018, the NDRC PAC raised $3 million and spent $2.7 million helping Democrats and attacking Republicans. North Carolina was its favorite target state: The PAC donated $500,000 to the state Democratic Party and $5,200 to Judge Anita Earls's successful campaign for the state Supreme Court (seat 5). It's raised nearly $4 million for

A DEVIL'S DICTIONARY

A good rule of thumb with left-wing advocacy groups is that their goal is usually the *opposite* of their name. Case in point: Fair Districts NC, a "nonpartisan" redistricting group that is actually a front for the liberal League of Women Voters' North Carolina branch—itself a nominally centrist group that strongly supports government-run health care, handgun bans, and other left-wing policies. Fair Districts NC is part of a nationwide network of similarly named groups, all of which are fronts for the League of Women Voters. In Pennsylvania and other states it's co-administered by the redistricting litigation group Common Cause.

Fair Districts lobbies for the creation of California-style independent redistricting commissions, but in keeping with this Devil's Dictionary nothing about such commissions is "independent." Far from being "transparent," taking the redistricting power from the state legislature and giving it to an appointed committee of individuals who aren't accountable to voters would all but guarantee genuine gerrymandering .

There's nothing "fair" about it. As CRC's Michael Watson has documented, similar redistricting commissions in California, Washington, Idaho, and Arizona have resulted in election outcomes that disproportionately favor one party over another—granting California Democrats, for instance, as many as ten extra seats relative to their party's state-wide proportion.

the 2020 cycle (as of August). The PAC is run by Elisabeth Pearson, former director of the Democratic Governors Association and Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), the party's main PACs for gubernatorial and U.S. Senate races.

The National Redistricting Action Fund, Holder's 501(c)(4) lobbying arm, is run by Kelly Ward, a former director for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, the Democrats' main PAC for congressional races. In 2019, the action fund spent $375,000 aiding Democrats running for state offices in Wisconsin (Lisa Neubauer, state Supreme Court) and Pennsylvania (Pam Iovino, SD-37).

The action fund manages the All on the Line campaign, focusing on turning out Democratic-leaning constitu-

encies in the 2020 Census. In August 2019, it launched Redistricting U with fanfare from Obama, who wrote in a fundraising email that "there's no one-size-fits-all solution to map manipulation."

Redistricting U was formed to "train volunteers, give them the tools to impact the redistricting process in their state, hear from them on how to best make change in their communities, and empower them to be leaders in the movement for fair maps." According to the group, North Carolina is a "key target."

A "Redistricting Coup"

The third group, the National Redistricting Foundation (NRF), has already had perhaps the most potent impact on the 2020 election. The 501(c)(3) group describes its mission as "initiating litigation that will have a nationwide impact in creating more just and representative electoral districts," which in effect means helping Democrats. To date, it has filed or supported several important lawsuits in states that are heavily contested at the state or congressional level. In Wisconsin, it demanded that then-Gov. Scott Walker (R) hold special elections in two state legislative districts. In Georgia, it accused Republicans of drawing racist congressional maps. And in North Carolina, it accused the state of drawing unfair congressional maps.

First, a little background: in 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out the maps drawn by North Carolina's legislature after the 2010 Census as overly partisan (*North Carolina v. Covington*), but instead of asking the state legislature to redraw them it appointed a special master: Nathaniel Persily, a Stanford University law professor. Critically, Professor Persily also redrew maps in Pennsylvania after a state court found them unconstitutional.

When the 2018 midterms came around, voters in both states went to the polls in districts that had been completely redrawn—and the Democrats won big.

Liberals declared that justice had been served. Conservatives saw it differently, with many claiming that North Carolina and Pennsylvania had simply been gerrymandered in favor of Democrats. To be fair, there were many

The U.S. Supreme Court threw out the maps drawn by North Carolina's legislature after the 2010 Census as overly partisan (North Carolina v. Covington)*, but instead of asking the state legislature to redraw them it appointed a special master: Nathaniel Persily, a Stanford University law professor.*

reasons why the Republicans lost and the Democrats won in those states, but the new maps arguably gave liberals an edge they didn't possess under the pre-2017 maps.

Yet one victory wasn't enough for the Left. On November 13, 2018—exactly one week after the midterm elections—Holder's NRF backed a lawsuit by a branch of Common Cause (a liberal redistricting group) claiming the state legislative maps were *still* gerrymandered. This time, however, they brought the case (*Common Cause v. Lewis*) to a state elections panel, which in a 2-1, 357-page ruling threw the maps out yet again on September 3, 2019. Republicans, faced with appealing the decision before the 6–1 Democratic majority in the state supreme court, admitted defeat.

If liberals were giddy before, they were now ecstatic. "Our heads are spinning here in North Carolina," the head of Common Cause North Carolina told the *New York Times*.

The *Wall Street Journal* editorial board called the move a "redistricting coup" meant to "tee up" Democrats for the 2020 election. "Liberals assail partisan gerrymanders as undemocratic except when they do the rigging."

> *The National Redistricting Action Fund launched Redistricting U with fanfare from Barack Obama, who wrote "there's no one-size-fits-all solution to map manipulation."*

Incredibly, that *still* wasn't the end of the Left's redistricting lawsuits in the Tar Heel State. Just weeks after the state panel ruling in September, the NRF filed another lawsuit, this time targeting North Carolina's congressional map, which it called perhaps "the most extreme and brazen partisan gerrymander in American history." Even the liberal *New York Times* recognized that the lawsuits' shared goal was "challeng[ing] Republican control of the next round of redistricting in 2021."

On October 30, 2019, three judges on North Carolina's Superior Court ruled that the congressional maps "do not permit voters to freely choose their representative, but rather representatives are choosing voters based upon sophisticated partisan sorting." The court threw out the congressional maps and ordered the legislature to draw remedial maps for the 2020 election under supervision of a court-appointed referee. Those remedial maps, which were eventually upheld by the court in December, were widely seen as helpful to Democrats, who are expected to pick up two seats in the 2020 election—reducing the state GOP's advantage in Congress from 10–3 to 8–5.

Rep. G.K. Butterfield, a Democrat representing the state's northeastern counties, still wasn't impressed: "To have a fair map we need a 6–7 map or a 7–6 map or a 6–6–1 map," he told the press. "Those would be fair maps."

Getting Out the (Democratic) Vote

Of course, this matters little if Democrats cannot win elections. Enter the Left's vast array of ostensibly nonpartisan GOTV nonprofits, which with few exceptions operate as tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public charities. The IRS considers voter registration a charitable act (like census registration). Moreover, these groups are required to be nonpartisan, but not non-ideological.

America Votes is at the nexus of left-wing GOTV activism. The self-described "coordination hub of the Progressive community" was devised by political operatives in the wake of the Democrats' defeat in the 2004 midterms as a way to build permanent left-wing infrastructure in all future elections.

To achieve this, it has amassed an incredible $95 million and the support of nearly every notable group on the Left to build an impressive network of aligned groups across two dozen states. North Carolina is the newest "core state" in America Votes' roster, meaning local operations are directly controlled by its office in Washington, DC. (Operations in less important "affiliate states" are generally outsourced to small, standalone affiliates.)

America Votes may be legally nonpartisan, but in practice that's a joke given that the professional operatives who dreamed it up include veteran Clinton official Harold Ickes, SEIU President Andy Stern, Sierra Club Executive Director

A GIANT MONEY FUNNEL

America Votes is also a donor to aligned state-level groups. In 2017, it gave $25,000 to NC Citizens for Protecting Our Schools, an education lobbying group that gave $1.1 million in 2017 to NC Families First—a group that spent millions of dollars attacking Republicans in the state legislature.

In 2016, America Votes gifted $175,000 to Make North Carolina First, a mysterious advocacy nonprofit with no website, yet raked in $4.1 million in 2016 and another $2.7 million in 2017. It's a good example of how the Left weaponizes nonprofits to achieve political aims—entirely in secret.

Among the activities listed in Make NC First's 2017 IRS Form 990 are "voter registration and voter representation." Its three-person board is headed by Adam Abram, owner of an insurance group and a board member for the left-wing groups Human Rights First and the Urban

Institute. In November 2019, Abram was appointed to the state Housing Finance Agency by the governor. Also on the board are Dean Debnam, who runs the highly successful polling firm Public Policy Polling, and Michael L. Weisel, a legal expert in independent expenditure activities—the domain of partisan super PACs.

In 2017 alone, Make NC First made eight (mostly six-figure) grants to groups such as North Carolina Latino Power, Progress North Carolina Action, Advance Carolina, and NC Citizens for Protecting Our Schools. In 2018, it granted $1.3 million to NC Citizens for Progress, a PAC which spent some $1.6 million in attack ads during the midterm elections.

The media reporting about Make NC First has been nonexistent—and with a name that vague, it will almost certainly stay that way.

" There's little doubt that America Votes is a thinly veiled tax-exempt political campaign for electing Democrats, and the Right has nothing comparable.

Carl Pope, EMILY's List founder Ellen Malcolm, and Partnership for America's Families President Steve Rosenthal.

Its leadership exhibits a similar partisan bent. The group's founding president was Anne Bartley, a former aide to First Lady Hillary Clinton and a wealthy Democratic donor involved in founding numerous prominent leftist organizations, including the Democracy Alliance. Its current director, Greg Speed, is a former staffer at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, a group with the sole purpose of electing Democrats to the House of Representatives.

America Votes is an original member of the Democracy Alliance—a shadowy collective of leftist mega-funders and influencers who meet annually to coordinate spending on political goals—which praises America Votes as "the common link between many of the largest and most influential issue and membership organizations in the country."

There's little doubt that America Votes is a thinly veiled tax-exempt political campaign for electing Democrats, and the Right has nothing comparable. A 2018 job posting shows the group sought a data expert whose job description is strikingly similar to that of a political campaign consultant: "Work with partner organizations using the voter file and other technologies to support and enhance voter contact programs."

CRC obtained an agenda for America Votes' state summit held in February 2019, where the workshops and strategy sessions sound far more like those run by partisan campaigns than tax-exempt nonprofits. The highlights include:

> 2020 is the next in the long series of "most important elections in our lifetimes." Indeed, the stakes could not be higher—from **winning the White House and ending the Trump Era in American politics to the fight for full control of Congress to the final state elections before the next redistricting.** Everything is on the line, and enormous change is possible if progressives are successful.

> While focus has clearly shifted toward 2020, **how should the remarkable 2018 cycle inform progressives' strategies moving forward?** What do last year's outcomes say about the real state of power in this country, and **what strategies and messages will not just help win the next election** but also move society toward broader equity and progress?

> . . . America Votes partners did much to **shape the midterm narrative and electorate on the ground in their states through effective advocacy and election programs** and strategies. The "Digging Deeper" breakout sessions will focus on what worked, what's replicable and/or what really needs to happen on the ground to **continue building toward further victory and progress in 2020 and beyond.**

> . . . Democrats and progressives have shown how passing over rural communities and small towns leads to a **steady plunge in voter support in recent elections**. This session will highlight the **need to reengage communities beyond urban and suburban cores** and strategies for rebuilding support in rural communities and small towns.

> . . . progressives fight to ensure a complete count and **fair 2020 Census, plus undo conservative gerrymanders in post-2020 redistricting**, all while enacting powerful democracy and election reforms such as **Automatic Voter Registration** at the state level.

> With 2020 fast approaching, the **Trump Administration's incompetence and malevolence threatens the integrity of the [census] count.**

The Democracy Alliance and Arabella Advisors

The Democracy Alliance has its own big plans for North Carolina. A recently unearthed 2016 internal report by the secretive group details 15 funding streams moving money to battleground states ahead of the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections to avoid attention. With names such as the Climate Action Fund and Latino Engagement Fund, these streams run through a pair of nonprofits managed by Arabella Advisors, a for-profit consultancy in Washington, DC, which runs a $600 million "dark money" funding network in America, as detailed in the 2019 CRC report "Big Money In Dark Shadows."

Democracy Alliance doesn't make grants itself. It's an invite-only strategy HQ for leftist luminaries to coordinate

how environmentalists, foundations, labor unions, and allied organizations will spend resources to reshape American elections.

According to the report, Democracy Alliance's 113 partners invested $146 million in 2016 alone in "Progressive infrastructure map organizations" and promised another $71 million to 2020 efforts. Yet those figures were promised before the 2016 election and Trump's election; we expect the actual 2020 sums to be even higher in the wake of the Left's anti-Trump "Resistance."

The report also reveals that much of this spending was channeled through the New Venture Fund and Sixteen Thirty Fund—two nonprofits created and run by Arabella Advisors—and paid out by them as grants to allied state-level groups. Donors are instructed to make their checks out to the Arabella-run nonprofits, thus hiding their involvement in the final grants paid out by Arabella's nonprofits. Thanks to this document, we know which states the Democracy Alliance has targeted and who benefited.

The New American Majority Fund and its 501(c)(4) "sister," the New American Majority Action Fund, raised over $1 million in 2016 to target left-wing outreach to likely Democratic-leaning constituencies in North Carolina, Virginia, Florida, Ohio, and Arizona. The funds especially targeted "Asian and Pacific Islanders Americans, women, the LGBTQ community, and white working class"—the so-called New American Majority. The pair's spending is overseen by Democracy Alliance staffers, the National Education Association (NEA) operative Daaiyah Bilal-Threats, and an SEIU representative.

Similarly, the Black Civic Engagement Fund and Action Fund—with oversight from the Ford Foundation, AFSCME, NEA, and SEIU—directs spending toward Blueprint NC and groups in other key states "to build political power and activism within the Black community." In 2016, the pair raised close to $5 million. They're joined by the Latino Engagement Fund and Action Fund, which also directed money to Blueprint NC. That pair raised over $2 million in 2016.

The State Engagement Initiative, another fund, raised $6.7 million in 2016 to create "donor tables" in battleground states, aiming to increase left-wing spending on

elections and the activist nonprofits supporting the Left. In North Carolina, it directed funds to a group mysteriously called Put NC First, possibly a front for the liberal news aggregate Real Facts NC. (Hilariously, the report mistook South Carolina for its northern sibling—that's cynical outside spending for you.)

"Dark Money" Looming in 2020

Of all the states up for grabs in the coming presidential election, perhaps none is the center of more bare-knuckle brawling between the Left and Right than North Carolina. Republicans and Democrats aren't just fighting for the state's 15 electoral votes—they're fighting for the sanctity of the republic's elections.

Left-wing progressives aren't interested in fairness and the forum of ideas. They fight dirty and play for keeps. If the Left bludgeons its way into power in the Tar Heel state, we can expect it to do everything possible to twist and mangle the law to cement a permanent left-wing majority through gerrymandering lawsuits, vote-by-mail schemes, ballot fraud, "independent" redistricting commissions, and a steady stream of cash to activist groups.

Worse, it will have proven that *any* state—no matter how conservative—is vulnerable. ◼

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A NEW FLORIDA MAJORITY?

The Left's voter mobilization campaign aims to transform several states into secured Democratic majorities. One of the most prominent entities driving this is the State Power Caucus, a coalition of 22 organizations from 15 states, including California Calls, New Virginia Majority, and Kentuckians for the Commonwealth. Spearheading its Florida offensive is a group called the New Florida Majority.

The New Florida Majority is an advocacy and voter mobilization group that aims to "create an inclusive multiracial, multilingual and multicultural movement" to decisively seize Florida from Republicans, controlling both the state government and the state's national electoral votes.

It is attempting to do this by targeting communities "that have been historically marginalized, excluded, and silenced" with campaigns centered around immigration reform, decreasing incarceration rates, and making it easier to vote. It also champions pro-abortion legislation and environmentalist measures.

Amendment 4 and Hurricane Matthew

New Florida Majority has achieved major wins for this platform. For example, in 2018, Florida voters passed Amendment 4 to the Florida state constitution, giving voting rights to 1.2 million convicted felons. The New Florida Majority and the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition accomplished this by working together to collect 1 million signatures to put the initiative on the ballot. Of the 1.2 million felons, 52 percent were Democrats, 33 percent were independents, and 14 percent were Republicans.

Since registering potential Democratic voting blocs and criminal justice reform are two major currents of the left-wing voter mobilization movement, this amendment and New Florida Majority's role in passing it should be seen as a massive victory for their movement and a portent of what is to come in other states.

The New Florida Majority also registered 31,000 new voters in 2017, helped pass the $15 per hour minimum wage in

Miami, and helped 108,000 additional people to register to vote in 2016 by helping the Florida Democratic Party sue then-Governor Rick Scott (R) to expand the registration period due to Hurricane Matthew.

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While the New Florida Majority bills itself as a mainstream social justice group, the people involved in the project have connections to radical, far-left groups.

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Efforts for 2020

The New Florida Majority is continuing its efforts to register new voters ahead of the 2020 election. It lists phone bank and "get out the vote" volunteer opportunities on its website to help the Democrats and presidential nominee Joe Biden in November. It also stays active by writing press releases and blog posts on local and national events, attempting to generate outcry on topics such as racial injustice, infringement on reproductive rights, and alleged voter disenfranchisement. New Florida Majority also provides readers the ability to donate to its "COVID-19 relief fund," which redirects to the New Florida Majority Education Fund's coffers.

Shane Devine is a Research Assistant at Capital Research Center. Originally from New Jersey, he is a recent graduate of The New School in New York City.

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Funding

By way of funding, identifying New Florida Majority's donors is difficult because it is a 501(c)(4) "dark money" group. But according to the Tides Foundation's publicly available tax filings, it gave $50,000 to New Florida Majority and $350,000 to New Florida Majority Education Fund in 2018. Tides Advocacy gave an additional $150,000 to New Florida Majority Education Fund that same year.

New Florida Majority Fund's receipts are easier to track because it is registered as a 501(c)(3). In addition to Tides, it has received $200,000 from the Arabella Advisors–managed New Venture Fund, $40,000 from Proteus Fund, $345,000 from NEO Philanthropy, $447,500 from the Marguerite Casey Foundation between 2015 and 2016, and $3,865,000 from the Ford Foundation between 2015 and 2018.

Radical Connections

While the New Florida Majority bills itself as a mainstream social justice group, several of the people involved in the project have connections to radical, far-left groups.

Jon Liss, a co-founder of State Power Caucus and New Virginia Majority, is a career organizer who endorsed the Inside-Outside Project, a collaboration of the "Communist Party, Democratic Socialists of America, Left Roots, the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism, and Liberation Road, which was formerly known as the Freedom Road Socialist Organization." He also endorsed the Right to the City Alliance, a coalition of 40 "New Work-

ing Class" organizations, which in Liss's words promotes "a collective vision for our cities—for all, green, feminist." The Ford Foundation gave Liss and four other colleagues an award, which included a $100,000 stipend.

Badili Jones, a political officer at New Florida Majority from 2012 to 2013, was a member of Liberation Road (Freedom Road Socialist Organization), the Communist Party USA, the February 2nd Movement, the Revolutionary Workers League (an American Trotskyist group), and the African Liberation Support Committee. According to the author biography on an essay he wrote on dialectical materialism, Jones is a professed "Marxist socialist" who was part of the New Communist Movement.

Andrea Cristina Mercado, president of the New Florida Majority, is a co-founder of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, a labor activist group tied to the alt-labor movement, which is supported by the Ford Foundation, Open Society Foundations, and the Marguerite Casey Foundation.

Mainstreaming the Fringe Left

This goes to show that what is deemed mainstream among liberals now—such as identity politics, defunding the police, letting felons vote, and abolishing ICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and enforcement of immigration laws—was confined to the most fringe corners of the radical left a decade ago. And what is considered fringe today will likely become mainstream a decade from now.

This process does not happen through some nebulous osmosis of ideas but directly through the collaboration of radical activists with upbeat, seemingly mainstream groups such as New Florida Majority, bankrolled by the usual suspects including the Tides Foundation, Arabella Advisors subsidiaries, and the Ford Foundation.

Redistricting

The National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC) is a political action committee that was created by Democratic Party operatives and members of the Obama administration in January 2017 to establish Democratic control in a number of states by redrawing their district maps. Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder is the chairman of the organization.

The committee secured almost $11 million in funding after its launch through its endorsement by former President Barack Obama, promising its patrons that it would help

Democrats win the gubernatorial and state legislative races essential to controlling the outcome of the 2020 redistricting cycle. Initial investors included "Democratic Party mega-donors" such as Alphawood Foundation president Fred Eychaner; film director J.J. Abrams and his wife, Katie McGrath; financier Donald Sussman; Arcus Foundation president Jon Stryker; and CEO of Analysis Group Martha Samuelson.

Since then, its contributors have included the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the Amalgamated Transit Union, the End Citizens United PAC, and Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA). Florida is listed on its website as a target state for the 2019–2020 election season. What this means can be illuminated by a look at how the committee has operated in the past.

The committee has been heavily involved in securing a long-term majority in Virginia since it was formed. In 2017, it joined forces with political advocacy group ACRONYM to mobilize voters to turn out for gubernatorial candidate Ralph Northam and Democrats down the ballot. Holder's group put $500,000 behind the effort.

Over the years, Holder has convinced Democratic donors that he could reverse the 2010 Tea Party–era Republican takeover of Virginia's state legislature and turn the commonwealth blue. Democratic groups spent $54 million in the 2019 Virginia election to see this happen. Michael Bloomberg, George Soros, and Tom Steyer outspent all outside Republican donors put together.

This effort led to a massive victory for Holder, in which the Democrats took both chambers of the Virginia General Assembly enabling them to redraw Virginia's district lines after the 2020 census. Wall Street Journal columnist Kimberly Strassel has predicted that the redistricting will likely result in a Democratic stranglehold over Virginia for the next decade.

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In a 2019 meeting at New Florida Majority's headquarters, Eric Holder, chairman of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, predicted the 2020 census would create two new congressional seats in Florida.

"Virginia was a target state for us in 2019 in the way that Florida is a target state for us in 2020," said Holder in a December 2019 meeting at New Florida Majority's headquarters. He continued: "[Florida] is an important state. What happens in this state has national consequences. And because it has national consequences, it truly has international consequences."

Left-of-center activist groups have been targeting Florida since a Republican trifecta of control in the state drew up a so-called gerrymandered district map in 2012. In December 2015, Florida's Supreme Court ruled in favor of a new map more favorable to Democrats, drawn up by a coalition led by the League of Women Voters, Common Cause of Florida, and several Democratic activists.

While Andrew Gillum, financially supported by the NDRC, failed to win the governorship in 2018, Democrats won six seats in the Florida House with the committee's help. The Florida House and Senate remain objectives for Holder in the 2020 election—having pledged at least $124,000 to only four House candidates—but Republicans' solid grasp of Florida along with a lack of competitive seats means Democrats will need to fight a lot harder for a Florida majority than they did in Virginia. Still, the new district map will help.

Holder is also involved with All On the Line, a fiscally sponsored project of the National Redistricting Action Fund, which is the 501(c)(4) lobbying arm of the NDRC. All On the Line asks its Florida supporters for help in demanding a "fair" map-drawing process in 2022, which will be informed by the updated population data from the 2020 Census.

In the 2019 meeting at New Florida Majority's headquarters, in addition to predicting the census would create two new congressional seats in Florida, Holder expressed concern that President Donald Trump's thwarted attempt to get a question about individuals' citizenship status on the census had already caused the damage it intended.

"This administration through its policies has put in place a climate of fear," he said. "Many people are concerned about raising their hands and saying, 'I want to be counted.'" He continued, "Just to be totally frank, that was designed to try to suppress the count in the Latino and Hispanic community."

Holder was implying that Florida, a state with a large immigrant population, will not accurately redraw its districts if its population is not accurately counted, even though the number of illegal immigrants should arguably be irrelevant since they cannot legally vote in elections. Nevertheless, New Florida Majority, the Wallace H. Coulter Foundation, the Urban League of Broward County, and other groups have raised money to ensure such populations are counted in the census, no doubt under the guidance of Democratic operatives such as Holder.

After sounding alarm bells about the Trump administration's proposed census question, Holder told the guests present at the meeting that they have backup plan in case the census results are not favorable to Democratic map-drawers: The NDRC will provide states with "map-drawing technology" of its own to compete redistricting efforts by Republican-controlled state legislatures.

"In 2011, one party had much better map-drawing technology than the other party did," Holder said. He and his NDRC are aggressively working to ensure that this does not happen again. ■

HOW THE LEFT PLANS TO FLIP PENNSYLVANIA

Summary: *With 20 electoral votes and an almost even split between Republicans and Democrats, Pennsylvania is a big prize for President Donald Trump and his eventual Democratic opponent in the 2020 election. But a well-funded, highly coordinated network of leftist groups in Washington, DC, are set on a larger goal: permanently flip Pennsylvania to Democratic blue. They're planning on warping the 2020 Census and the congressional redistricting process in 2021 to build an unbeatable left-wing advantage in the Keystone State for the next decade.*

"He who controls redistricting controls Congress."

When political strategist Karl Rove wrote those words, he was predicting a coming Republican wave that would seize control of state legislatures across America just in time for the 2010 redistricting process, when America's 435 districts for the House of Representatives are redrawn.

Rove was right, and the GOP's efforts paid off: Republicans defeated 492 Democratic incumbents in the 2010 midterm elections and picked up majorities in 20 legislative chambers.

The Constitution mandates that all congressional districts be reapportioned between the states based on population and redrawn as needed by state legislatures after each census, held every 10 years. This makes redistricting a powerful—and inherently partisan—process for the party in power.

Naturally, liberal critics accused Republicans of "gerrymandering" after 2010, drawing biased maps favoring their party in the states where they held majorities, thereby cementing a conservative advantage in future elections.
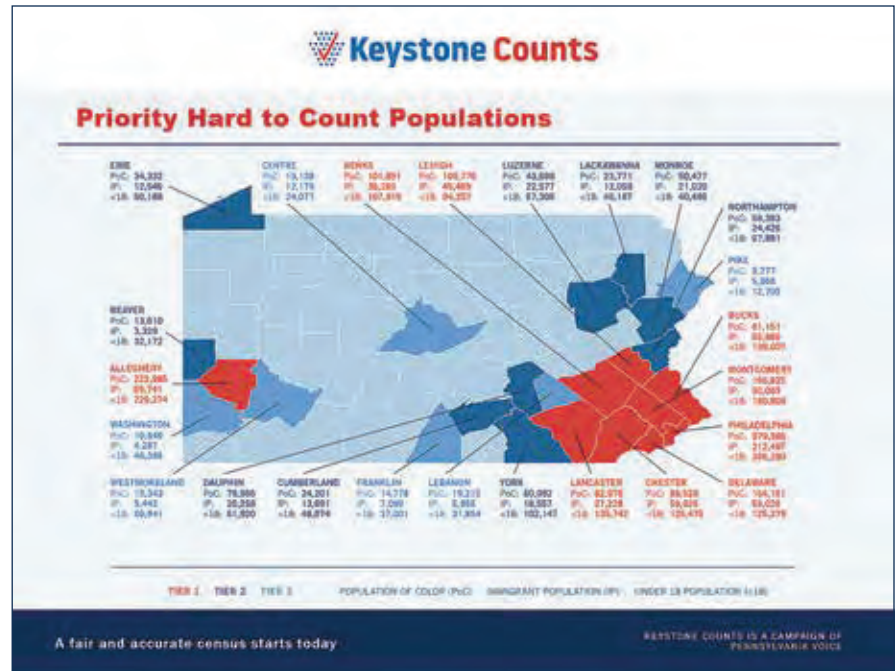
But a decade after the 2010 Republican sweep, the Left has wised up to the importance of redistricting. A slew of well-

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funded activist groups focused on winning state legislatures have emerged with a plan to redraw America's congressional maps to favor Democrats. If they garner majorities in the 2020 election, they could ensure Democratic control of Congress until at least 2030.

That fight comes down to a handful of key battleground states, particularly Pennsylvania, where Donald Trump narrowly edged Hillary Clinton 48.2 percent to 47.5 percent

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in 2016, and Republicans maintain a modest majority in the state legislature. To counter this, left-wing groups in the Keystone State have a three-point plan to ensure their dominance in the coming decade:

1. Increase the count of traditionally Democratic-voting constituencies in Pennsylvania in the 2020 Census.

2. Boost 2020 voter turnout to gain a Democratic majority in the Pennsylvania legislature.

3. Redraw congressional maps to favor Democratic strongholds in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Allentown.

And it's working. In 2018, the Left made big gains in Pennsylvania through a combination of whipping up support among the so-called New American Majority—ethnic and minority groups, LGBT identity groups, recent immigrants, and women—and successful litigation to throw out the state's congressional maps as unconstitutionally favorable toward Republicans.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, it's coordinated and funded by elite groups in Washington, DC Chief among them is Eric Holder, the Obama administration's scandal-ridden and disgraced former U.S. attorney general, whose team of lawyers forms the vanguard in the Left's redistricting war.

Holder's Campaign to Redraw the Battle Lines

Holder is the ultimate Washington insider and political elite. His tenure as attorney general saw him held in contempt by a bipartisan Congress, while critics on the Right charged the self-described "activist attorney general" with politicizing the U.S. Justice Department by ignoring Democratic voter intimidation cases and hiring only committed leftists to the civil service.

He held a lucrative job at the mega-lobbying firm Covington & Burling from 2001 until he was sworn in as the U.S. attorney general in February 2009. After leaving office in 2015, he immediately returned as a partner in the firm, which literally kept an empty office waiting for him, according to one report. (Liberal *Rolling Stone* called him a "Wall Street Double Agent" for cashing in on the $2.5 million partnership

Eric Holder is the ultimate Washington insider and political elite. His tenure as attorney general saw him held in contempt by a bipartisan Congress.

immediately after leaving public service; he's still listed as a partner at Covington & Burling.)

He's also an out-and-out partisan. In July 2017, Holder declared that "Congress is broken" thanks to Republicans' "extreme partisan gerrymandering." "This creates a Congress driven by primary party politics and ideological extremism," he added, "not one accountable to the will of the majority of voters."

His solution: the National Democratic Redistricting Committee (NDRC), a political action committee (PAC) created after the 2016 election and chaired by Holder with the aim of replacing "gerrymandered" maps favoring Republicans with gerrymandered maps favoring Democrats. NDRC calls itself the "strategic hub for a comprehensive redistricting strategy" for Democrats, and it's led by alumni from the Democratic Party's biggest PACs.

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> *NDRC calls itself the "strategic hub for a comprehensive redistricting strategy" for Democrats, and it's led by alumni from the Democratic Party's biggest PACs.*

The group has set its sights on 12 states where Republicans either have a legislative majority (Texas) or face a close race against Democrats (North Carolina) in 2020. His goal couldn't be more partisan: permanently flip them Democratic blue.

NDRC has the support of former President Barack Obama. Obama's campaign–turned–activist group, Organizing for Action (formerly Obama for America), which merged with the NDRC in 2019—gifting the NDRC the formidable list of donors, supporters, and

volunteers built by the Obama campaigns over more than a decade. Now dubbed "All on the Line" under NDRC's leadership, the combined groups have targeted 10 states with lawsuits meant to influence their redistricting to favor the Left in what Obama called an "opportunity to bend the great arc of history toward justice."

When Holder launched the NDRC in a speech at the Center for American Progress, he outlined three goals:

1. Get Democrats elected at the state level in order to redraw congressional maps.

2. "Reform" the redistricting process with California-like citizens' commissions.

3. Litigate Republican-drawn congressional maps into oblivion.

If that sounds like the three-step plan to permanently flip Pennsylvania, that's because it is. The NDRC's organizational forms filed with the IRS state its partisan goal in black and white: "To build a comprehensive plan to favorably position Democrats for the redistricting process through 2022."

The operation involves three groups: the NDRC, a partisan PAC that supports Democrats running for Congress; the National Redistricting Action Fund, a 501(c)(4) that lobbies for state ballot measures supporting redistricting "reforms"; and the National Redistricting Foundation, a 501(c)(3) that litigates against Republican-drawn maps.

Holder's NDRC PAC is pouring money directly into Pennsylvania races. In the 2017–2018 election cycle, the NDRC sent $250,000 to Gov. Tom Wolf's (D) successful reelection campaign and another $100,000 sent to the Pennsylvania Democratic Party's Senate PAC. In the 2019–2020 cycle, it's already given at least $25,000 to the Democrats' Pennsylvania Senate PAC.

The National Redistricting Action Fund, Holder's 501(c)(4) lobbying arm, All on the Line campaign, focusing on turning out Democratic-leaning constituencies in the 2020 Census. In 2018 it also funded Democratic-aligned groups pouring cash into Pennsylvania races, gifting $2 million to PACRONYM—which ran nearly $1 million in independent expenditure campaigns against Republicans that year—and $100,000 to the PA Fund for Change, which spent $2.5 million helping Democrats running for the state legislature.

But the National Redistricting Foundation has already had perhaps the most potent impact on the 2020 election. The 501(c)(3) group describes its mission as "initiating litigation that will have a nationwide impact in creating more just and representative electoral districts," which in effect means

helping Democrats. To date, it has filed or supported several lawsuits. In Wisconsin, it demanded that then-Gov. Scott Walker (R) hold special elections in two state legislative districts. In Georgia, it accused Republicans of drawing racist congressional maps. And in North Carolina, it accused the state of drawing unfair congressional maps. Each of these is a heavily contested state for Democrats at the state or congressional level.

The National Redistricting Foundation has also litigated to huge effect against Pennsylvania's congressional map, which was drawn by the state's Republican majority in 2011. In 2017, the National Redistricting Foundation and the liberal League of Women Voters filed a lawsuit alleging that the map unconstitutionally favored Republicans. The state courts, including the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, threw the map out and redrew it in early 2018.

Liberals cheered; conservatives jeered. The *New York Times* wrote, "Democrats couldn't have asked for much more from the new map. It's arguably even better for them than the maps they proposed themselves." One Republican consultant called it a "straight power grab by a partisan Supreme Court."

A victorious Holder stated that the decision shows "how important it is that we elect more Democrats who will fight for fairness." And he's right—the new Pennsylvania maps, "fair" or not, arguably favor the Keystone State's Democratic strongholds over Republican-held rural areas and will undoubtedly reshape the makeup of its 18 congressional representatives after the 2020 election.

Observers saw the fallout on Pennsylvania's congressional delegation in the 2018 midterms, just months after the redistricting decision. In 2016, Republicans held a 12-6 majority of the state's congressmen elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Just two years later they finished with a 9-9 tie under the new maps.

Gerrymandering Pennsylvania

Keystone Counts is the leading campaign in Pennsylvania to boost the number of Democratic-leaning constituencies in the 2020 Census and the redistricting process. It's run by Pennsylvania Voice, an affiliate of State Voices, one of the most influential national groups coordinating the Left's strategy in the state.

State Voices is one of the many groups created after the Democrats' defeat in the 2004 election, with the goal of crafting permanent left-wing infrastructure in battleground states. Consequently, it's one of the Democracy Alliance's "recommended organizations," meaning the collective

considers State Voices a key group for all its 2020 efforts, and its funding proves it. Since its creation, State Voices has received $43 million in grants from the George Soros–run Open Society, Ford, and Tides Foundations, among other liberal heavyweights.

State Voices isn't shy about its objectives: "The two pillars of our civic representation work are the 2020 Census and fair redistricting in 2021." The officially "nonpartisan" group plays up traditionally Democratic-leaning constituencies in "Get Out the Count" (GOTC) activities ahead of the census, mirroring partisan "Get Out the Vote" (GOTV) efforts in elections. (Like voter registration, the IRS considers aiding the U.S. Census Bureau in counting people in the census a "charitable" activity for tax-exempt nonprofits.)

In practice, that involves making grants to state-level affiliates such as Pennsylvania Voice. Between 2016 and 2017 State Voices paid out almost $6 million in grants to voter/census turnout groups targeting critical states—such as Minnesota Voice, Blueprint North Carolina, and Pennsylvania Voice—and constituencies, particularly Latinos (through Mi Familia Vota). Those groups in turn trickle part of their funding down to their own network of in-state activists and then use the rest to push likely Democratic voters to support redistricting and the census.

The Philadelphia-based Pennsylvania Voice is run by Erin Casey, a professional activist with a background in astroturf (fake grassroots) campaigns. In the 2018 midterms, her group coordinated 19 other Pennsylvania Voice affiliates to run voter registration drives in 11 counties and reportedly registered 43,000 new "voters of color" and made half-a-million contacts with voters (via text message, robocall, or direct mail).

With the 2020 census looming, the group has pivoted to increasing census counts in 24 counties using dozens of small and mid-level activist groups across Pennsylvania. CRC obtained a PowerPoint presentation by the group intended for donors that reveals an obvious preference for "hard to count populations" in densely populated, historically Democratic-voting counties.

Seven of the nine top-tier counties targeted by Pennsylvania Voice voted for Hillary Clinton in 2016. All of them voted for Democratic Gov. Wolf in the 2018 governor's race.

In 2021, Pennsylvania Voice plans to shift focus to "fair" redistricting (read: favoring Democrats) as part of its long-term goal of shifting Pennsylvania to the left. That includes building constituent support for "voting rights reform efforts," almost certainly referring to such California-style policies as automatic voter registration and looser voter identification laws. (Pennsylvania requires only first-time voters to provide identification.)

Aiding Pennsylvania Voice is Fair Districts PA, a joint project of the League of Women Voters and Common Cause, which advocates for California-style independent redistricting commissions nationwide and in Pennsylvania. The League of Women Voters is nominally centrist, but in fact strongly supports government-run health care, handgun bans, and other liberal policies. Common Cause is one of the leading "fair redistricting" groups on the Left and also targets Republicans for embarrassing ethics violations, including its most famous censure target: Robert Bork in 1985.

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And there's nothing "independent" about such redistricting commissions. As CRC's Michael Watson has documented, similar redistricting commissions in California, Washington, Idaho, and Arizona have resulted in election outcomes that disproportionately favor one party over another—granting California Democrats, for instance, as much as 10 "extra" seats relative to their party's statewide proportion!

Flippable and Swing Left

Two more key PACs are aiding the Left's effort to permanently control Pennsylvania and key battleground states: Flippable and Swing Left. The two work in tandem. In 2018, New York–based Flippable targeted state legislatures, while the much larger Swing Left aimed at wresting control of the U.S. House of Representatives from the Republicans.

Both are growing rapidly. Flippable spent just under $375,000 in the 2018 cycle. In the 2020 cycle, it has already spent $415,000. Swing Left spent over $12 million in 2018 and for the current cycle has already spent $5.4 million (as of March 2020).

Flippable takes credit for "flipping" the Virginia legislature in 2018, enabling Democrats to enact "pro-democracy policies in 2020 and draw fair maps in 2021"—essentially giving

The current head of America Votes, Greg Speed, is a former staffer at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, a group whose sole purpose is to elect Democrats to the House of Representatives.

Credit: For Our Future Michigan. License: https://bit.ly/3cENYXs.

them a ten-year majority in the Old Dominion, until after the 2030 Census. It boasts that since 2016 it has "helped elect 95 Democrats in game-changing states," resulting in seven state legislative chambers flipping from Republican to Democratic control.

In 2020, it has identified ten other targets—each a battleground—including Florida, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. "Until 2018, Pennsylvania's congressional district map was one of the worst instances of partisan gerrymandering in the nation," writes Flippable on its website. The new, "temporary" court-drawn maps have boosted Democrats, but they're set to be redrawn in 2021—so Flippable is targeting the Pennsylvania legislature to ensure a Democratic majority in time for 2021.

Swing Left is more broadly aimed to expanding Democratic control of Congress and beating Trump in 2020. Like Flippable, it's targeting 12 "super states" in the coming election and is brazen about its goal: drawing "fairer district maps" that ensure "more Democrats are elected in the U.S. House over the next 10 years."

In Pennsylvania, that comes down to two goals: "1) win the state's 20 Electoral College votes and 2) break Republican control of the state legislature by flipping one or both chambers."

> In the state Senate, we are currently targeting five districts—four GOP-held seats and one Democratic hold. With only half of the chamber up for election in 2020, **our Senate targets are scattered across the state, including Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, Erie, and the Philadelphia suburbs.**

> **In the state House, we are currently targeting 16 districts—13 GOP-held seats and three Democratic holds.** Eleven seats are in Southeast Pennsylvania, close to the Philadelphia metro area and surrounding regions. The remaining five targets are located near Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre, and the Pittsburgh suburbs [emphasis added].

Swing Left has received five- and six-figure donations from leading Democratic donors and liberal luminaries. Actor Kevin Bacon gave Swing Left $50,000 in 2019, as did LGBT mega-donor Edward W. Snowdon (not to be confused with National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden). Two fashion designers have donated to it: Tom Ford gave the PAC $100,000, and Michael Kors gave $65,000.

Getting Out the Vote—for Democrats

Supporting the census operation is the Left's vast network of voter turnout groups. These organizations—which almost universally operate as tax-exempt nonprofits, mostly 501(c)(3) public charities—hide behind their IRS-required "nonpartisan" status, yet their efforts to turn out progressive voters put them squarely in league with the Democratic Party.

Chief among them is America Votes, which calls itself the "coordination hub of the Progressive community." America Votes emerged from the Democrats' defeat in the 2004 presidential election as the brainchild of a group of influential operatives. These operatives—Clinton official Harold Ickes, SEIU President Andy Stern, Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope, EMILY's List founder Ellen Malcolm, and Partnership for America's Families President Steve Rosenthal—quickly gained the support of major labor unions, litigation nonprofits, abortion groups, environmentalist groups, and professional activists to put together a huge $95 million war chest for churning out likely Democratic voters in key battleground states, including Pennsylvania.

Nonprofits like America Votes may register people to vote so long as they don't direct them *who* to vote for. However, it can—and does—funnel millions of dollars to partisan PACs aligned with the Democrats. In 2017 (the most recent year on record), America Votes granted $160,000 to the Pennsylvania-based PAC Environment America Action Fund and $50,000 to the Harrisburg-based activist group One Pennsylvania.

America Votes Action Fund, the group's super PAC, also engages in direct attacks on Republican politicians. In 2018, it spent $20,000 attacking Republican Reps. Brian

> *In close races such as PA-18, America Votes' concentrated, motivated get-out-the-vote operation can change election results.*

Fitzpatrick and George Kelly and $30,000 supporting Democratic Reps. Henry Scott Wallace, Scott George, and Ronald Dinicola.

If there's any doubt that "nonpartisan" America Votes was always intended to aid Democrats with a wink and a nod, consider its founding leadership. The current head of America Votes, Greg Speed, is a former staffer at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, a group whose sole purpose is to elect Democrats to the House of Representatives. Its founding president was Anne Bartley, a former aide to First Lady Hillary Clinton and a wealthy Democratic donor involved in founding numerous prominent leftist organizations, including the Democracy Alliance.

In fact, America Votes is an original member of the Democracy Alliance, a shadowy collective of leftist mega-funders and influencers who meet annually to coordinate spending on political goals. The Democracy Alliance even praises America Votes as "the common link between many of the largest and most influential issue and membership organizations in the country."

Pennsylvania is one of the first states in which America Votes began organizing, starting in 2003. America Votes considers Pennsylvania a "core state," meaning the organization directly controls the get-out-the-vote operations in the state. Operations in less important "affiliate states" are generally outsourced to small, standalone affiliates.

Job postings on the website LinkedIn indicate that America Votes Pennsylvania is hiring data experts whose key responsibilities include "increasing engagement of state-based groups building power in communities of color in the planning process" and developing "campaign plans" for "maximizing shared voter file, targeting, and other data resources." Another 2018 job listing for a field program manager lists responsibilities such as working with "dozens of Progressive partners across the state [Pennsylvania] as they plan and execute electoral and issue campaigns."

These are more like job postings for a staffer on a political campaign, not a tax-exempt and nonpartisan nonprofit.

Similarly, in 2015, the field director for America Votes Pennsylvania gave a presentation to attendees of the Pennsylvania Progressive Summit, a political conference, on the "Progressive Roadmap to 2016"—lessons for the Left

to win in the 2016 election. This seems to stretch the IRS definition of "charitable" beyond the breaking point.

Sure enough, America Votes acts in tandem with a coalition of some 50 left-wing groups to spur voter turnout for Democrats. The Pennsylvania branch of For Our Future, a $90 million PAC co-founded by billionaire and presidential also-ran Tom Steyer, is one such group. (Steyer's eco-activist group, NextGen Climate, has donated tens of millions of dollars to For Our Future since its creation in 2016.)

For Our Future bragged in a 2018 press release that it "helped turn out the vote for [Gov. Tom] Wolf, [Sen. Bob] Casey, [Rep. Chrissy] Hohenstein, [State Sen. Lindsey] Williams and other key races across the state"—and that the redrawn congressional maps helped Democrats win big.

> With the newly redrawn congressional maps, **For Our Future PA helped turn out voters for congressional candidates who helped Democrats win back the House of Representatives. . . .** [For Our Future PA] also helped Democrats pick up a minimum of 10 seats in the state House of Representatives and five seats in the state Senate [emphasis added].

For Our Future PA added that the entire America Votes coalition in Pennsylvania "collectively knocked on 2.1 million doors during this election cycle and turned out a record number of midterm election voters across the state." Don't expect them to aim low in 2020, either; presidential elections typically see even higher voter turnout than midterms.

The Democracy Alliance credits America Votes with "engag[ing] and mobiliz[ing] voters in the successful PA-18 special election" for a congressional seat vacated by Republican Rep. Tim Murphy, after it was revealed that the supposedly anti-abortion Murphy had urged his mistress to have an abortion.

According to the Democracy Alliance, America Votes and its allies used an "innovative text message plan" to reach 100,000 voters. Democrat Conor Lamb narrowly beat Republican Rick Saccone in a firmly conservative district *by just 755 votes*—or 49.9 to 49.5 percent.

There are undoubtedly many reasons why Lamb won an upset victory, but in close races such as PA-18, America

The group's latest IRS Form 990 filing from 2017 lists its president as Gabe Morgan, who is vice president of the powerful SEIU 32BJ local (covering Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic) and president of the SEIU Pennsylvania State Council, the union's state political arm.

Votes' concentrated, motivated get-out-the-vote operation can change election results. And the Democracy Alliance, the biggest collection of left-wing influencers and billionaires in America, credits them with doing just that.

Who's Behind One Pennsylvania?

Also prominent in the Left's get-out-the-vote drive is One Pennsylvania (One PA), an activist group that's virtually a subsidiary of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), one of the largest institutional donors on the Left.

One PA was formed in 2011 by the SEIU but claims to have gone "fully independent" after it had "outgrown" the union. The facts say otherwise. For example, Erin Kramer, One PA's current executive directors according to the online listing, is a career SEIU organizer. The group's latest IRS Form 990 filing from 2017 lists its president as Gabe Morgan, who is vice president of the powerful SEIU 32BJ local (covering Pennsylvania and the mid-Atlantic) and president of the SEIU Pennsylvania State Council, the union's state political arm. (SEIU 32BJ is notoriously aggressive in its support for Democrats, and it has a history of corruption.)

The rest of One PA's board is drawn *exclusively* from the SEIU: Tom Herman, president of SEIU Local 668 in Harrisburg; Reesa Kossoff, executive director of the SEIU Pennsylvania State Council; Matt Yarnell, president of SEIU Healthcare Pennsylvania, another local; and David Melman, manager for the Pennsylvania arm of Workers United, a division of the SEIU.

Yet not one of One PA's board members is listed anywhere on One PA's website, even among its leadership.

Between 2011 and 2018, the SEIU gave $10.3 million to One PA—a group whose total revenues in 2016 were just $1.6 million and half that in 2017. Since 2015, it has also received at least $50,000 from America Votes, $90,000 from the agitation group Center for Community Change, and $17,000 from the Tides Foundation (notably for "lobbying grants").

One PA credits itself with knocking on some 238,000 doors and turning out nearly 7,000 voters to support left-wing candidates in the 2018 midterms. The group endorsed three Democrats for the Pennsylvania state legislature, all of whom were elected, and it endorsed another 11 candidates in the 2019 city council races in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia.

The Democracy Alliance Emerges from the Shadows

One PA has also earned the attention of the highly secretive Democracy Alliance, which apparently considers the group one of the most important in Pennsylvania. "If we don't break escalating conservative control in key states like Ohio, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and North Carolina," the collective has stated, "the redistricting plans that are drawn up after the [2020] Census will cement right-wing power for decades to come."

Remember, the Democracy Alliance doesn't make grants itself. Instead, it's an invite-only strategy HQ for leftist luminaries to coordinate how environmentalists, foundations, labor unions, and allied organizations will spend resources to reshape American elections.

A recently unearthed 2016 internal report by the secretive group details 15 funding streams moving money to battleground states ahead of the 2016, 2018, and 2020 elections to avoid attention. With names such as the "Climate Action Fund" and "Latino Engagement Fund," these streams run through a pair of nonprofits managed by Arabella Advisors, a for-profit consultancy in Washington, D.C., and perhaps the biggest "dark money" funding network in America.

According to the report, in 2016 alone the Democracy Alliance's 113 partners invested $146 million in "Progressive infrastructure map organizations" and promised another $71 million to 2020 efforts. (Those figures were promised prior to the 2016 election and Trump's election; we expect *actual* 2020 sums to be even higher in the wake of the Left's anti-Trump "Resistance.")

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> *After Trump's close victory in Pennsylvania in 2016, it's little wonder that Democratic-aligned PACs are spending millions of dollars in the state ahead of the 2020 election.*

The report also reveals that much of this spending was channeled through the New Venture Fund and Sixteen Thirty Fund—two nonprofits created and run by Arabella Advisors—and paid out by them as grants to allied state-level groups. Thanks to this document, we know which states the Democracy Alliance has targeted and who benefited.

Also prominent in the Left's get-out-the-vote drive is One Pennsylvania (One PA), an activist group that's virtually a subsidiary of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), one of the largest institutional donors on the Left.

The Climate Fund, for example, raised roughly $1.3 million in 2016 and gave One PA at least $188,000 in 2018 through the Arabella-run Sixteen Thirty Fund for "fighting a proposed refinery and dirty energy port facility in a low-income African-American community, **educating voters on U.S. Senate candidate positions** on climate change, and mobilizing them to vote" (emphasis added).

Similarly, the Democracy Alliance's Youth Engagement Fund raised $3.5 million to bolster youth turnout, what the report calls the Left's "long-term competitive advantage against the political Right." Almost all of that was intended for youth turnout in elections—ideally "doubling" it in "high impact states." On the report's list of recipients are two branches of One PA: One Pittsburgh and the PA Student Power Network.

Finally, the Democracy Alliance's State Engagement Initiative, is pretty brazen about its electoral goals in 2016, 2018, and 2020, including in Pennsylvania:

> The dual goals of the State Engagement Initiative are both to **change state policy through the electoral process** and create pooled funds to leverage new state investments . . . . **The states in which we are working in have either total conservative dominance at all levels of governance** or mixed governance, so there is no state here where we can currently exercise progressive policy on the economy, health care or the social safety net [emphasis added].

The Cash Comes Pouring In

After Trump's close and largely unexpected victory in Pennsylvania in 2016, it's little wonder that Democratic-aligned PACs are spending millions of dollars in the state ahead of the 2020 election.

In July 2019, the Democratic super PAC Priorities USA—which spent $66 million helping to reelect Barack Obama in 2012 and spent another $117 million supporting Hillary Clinton in 2016, the most of any super PAC that year—announced the creation of Priorities Pennsylvania. Part of a $100 million four-state plan, the group plans on flooding Pennsylvania with tens of millions of dollars to support Democrats and bash Trump's economy as "mostly helping wealthy people, not the middle-class."

The Democratic attack group American Bridge 21st Century has already launched multiple television ads featuring self-identified Trump voters saying they've "soured on the president" and won't support his reelection bid. (As it turns out, an Erie news outlet discovered that one of the supposed ex-Trump voters didn't even vote in 2016.) The ads are part of American Bridge's $10 million anti-Trump advertisement campaign launched in MARCH/APRIL 2020 covering Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan—three states he narrowly flipped in 2016.

And the Tom Steyer–backed PAC For Our Future, which Politico describes as "the nation's largest super PAC devoted to grassroots Democratic turnout," is targeting Southeastern Pennsylvania, according to media reports.

There's no doubt that the elites in Washington, D.C., have their eyes set on rebuilding the "Blue Wall" of Democratic strongholds that Trump tore down in his historic 2016 campaign—and they may have the resources to do it.

Whomever Democrats nominate to represent their party in the 2020 presidential election, he'll start the race in Pennsylvania with a powerful, highly coordinated network of activists and mega-funders at his back. ■

ERIC HOLDER'S PLAN TO GERRYMANDER AMERICA

An inside look at the National Democratic Redistricting Committee

Summary: *Former attorney general Eric Holder is riddled with scandal from the Obama administration, but that won't stop him from pushing a far-left agenda—and possibly even a presidential run in 2020. Holder has his fingers in the upcoming congressional redistricting pie, and if he has his way, he'll replace what he considers to be fake Republican "gerrymandering" with real Democratic gerrymandering—with disastrous results.*

The notion of Eric Holder as a presidential candidate in 2020 might seem rather laughable at first, considering the baggage he brings with him from scandals in both the Clinton and Obama administrations. He's also the ultimate Washington insider, epitomizing the revolving door between government and lobbying.

However, nominating him for president might actually make some sense considering the Democratic Party is already pinning so much of their hopes for future success on the former attorney general. These hopes are for rebuilding state parties so that Democrats will have a bench of candidates to draw from after being decimated over the last eight years during President Barack Obama's administration.

Holder is the chairman of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee—which, as the name indicates, is partisan, oriented toward getting more Democrats elected, and is largely based on excuses for past losses. That's perfectly OK. One would expect both parties to seek a leg up for winning elections and occasionally make excuses for losing them. What's insufferable is the high-minded rhetoric that Holder's organization is using, as if it's only looking to save democracy.

The existence of the organization also makes the illogical leap that election losses are not because Democratic policies fail, or that candidates are bad, or their ideas can't be sold to mainstream voters. No. Actually, it's that the system is rigged by the way congressional and state legislative districts are drawn.

The notion of Eric Holder as a presidential candidate in 2020 might seem rather laughable at first, considering the baggage he brings with him from scandals in both the Clinton and Obama administrations.

The NDRC touts "fair maps" for districts. Fair (typically the Left's favorite catch-all word for seeking an advantage over their opponents) is how Holder and former President Barack Obama are selling the redistricting crusade. Obama has reportedly jumped aboard as Holder's ally as his post-presidency pet project.

In Holder's statements, speeches, and writings about the committee, he doesn't attack gerrymandering itself, which Democrats used for decades to build up their congressional and state legislative majorities. Rather, he attacks Republican gerrymandering.

Holder's great test will come in this year's state races in Virginia and New Jersey, as well as in 2018 with a focus on state legislative races across the United States.

Fred Lucas is the White House correspondent for the Daily Signal *and the author of T*ainted by Suspicion: The Secret Deals and Electoral Chaos of Disputed Presidential Elections.

If Democrats can also win big at the state level in 2020, they'll be in a prime position to create multiple shades of blue maps for state legislators and members of Congress in 2021 reapportionment.

In a July CNN.com op-ed, Holder declared that "Congress is broken," and essentially made himself the repairman, as if he was above the partisanship. He complained:

> Extreme partisan gerrymandering reached new levels during the 2011 redistricting process, propelled by precision targeting technology and special interest funding, Republicans drew maps in state after state that packed Democratic voters into bizarrely shaped districts and protected Republican incumbents…. With fewer competitive congressional seats, members of Congress are incentivized to serve narrow, partisan interests. This creates a Congress driven by primary party politics and ideological extremism, not one accountable to the will of the majority of voters.

Holder crowed about the fact that federal courts were taking up cases of what he calls "illegal gerrymandering" in Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin, and Texas. He also played up identity politics, saying that some litigation by other parties "already produced fairer maps—and led to two new African-American members of Congress."

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> *Holder declared that "Congress is broken," and essentially made himself the repairman.*

Holder has also made himself a key leader of the "Resistance." Of course, he's not just some do-gooder. The NDRC is a side gig, as he's working for the Washington, D.C., super-firm Covington & Burling, for which he is retained by the California state legislature in its drive to defy federal law under President Donald Trump's administration. So, he and the firm will profit handsomely from Trump hatred. As a bonus, this feeds his radical progressive ideology.

This comes after a tumultuous period as attorney general— found in contempt of Congress in a bipartisan vote and seemingly declaring war on the free press—as he brazenly used the Justice Department to reward friends and punish enemies. He sought to promote political causes, making

relationships with such far-left groups as Al Sharpton's National Action Network and Media Matters for America, and bailing out the New Black Panther Party from prosecution over voter intimidation—even though voting rights is something he claims to care about.

While serving as attorney general, Holder once said: "If you want to call me an activist attorney general, I will proudly accept that label. Any attorney general who is not an activist is not doing his or her job." Noting the criticisms of those who had complained that the Justice Department had an activist attorney general," Holder added: "I'd say I agree with you 1,000 percent and proud of it." (FrontPageMag, Aug. 4, 2014).

But even Holder had to abide by some ethical constraints and appearance of nonpartisan law enforcement if he reasonably wanted to remain attorney general. Now out of office, with added clout and a powerful Washington law firm behind him, it's difficult to imagine he feels any shackles.

PAINTING THE MAP BLUE

The National Democratic Redistricting Committee was incorporated in late fall 2016, but didn't formally launch until this year.

In January, Holder announced the formal launch of the NRDC during a speech at the Center for American Progress. He said the three priorities for the organization would be: 1) electoral, meaning getting Democrats elected at the state level; 2) "a proactive legal strategy," meaning lawsuits over existing or proposed legislative lines; and 3) ballot initiatives, when "this is the best strategy to produce fairer maps."

Holder told the Center for American Progress.

> This redistricting process will be critical to the future of our democracy…. Those who control state governments draw the lines that shape Congress for the next decade. Fixing this redistricting problem will involve not just focusing on the lines, but focusing on the larger effort to win back governance. This is the path to ensuring Democrats have their rightful seats at the table in 2021.

The organization is a "527," a name derived from a section in the federal tax code. This means the NRDC is dedicated to influencing policy or elections and may raise unlimited amounts of money from corporations and labor unions.

And, Obama is on board as a goal of his post-presidency. During his final State of the Union address, the president told a joint session of Congress in 2016: "I think we've got to end the practice of drawing our congressional districts so that politicians can pick their voters, and not the other way around. Let a bipartisan group do it."

In 42 states, the state legislatures decide on congressional districts, while in 37 states, the lawmakers decide on state legislative districts.

The effort involves the Democratic Governors Association and the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, which focuses on raising money for state races. DLCC spokeswoman Carolyn Fiddler was ecstatic to have Obama helping out. She said:

> DLCC is thrilled that former Attorney General Holder and President Obama are engaging in this crucial effort. Redistricting and state legislative elections are vital to the future of the Democratic Party, and the president's involvement will help drive that fact home to a broad audience. (The Daily Signal, Oct. 23, 2016)

Democratic Governors Association Chairman Dan Malloy, the governor of Connecticut, said the organization should help in electing more governors for the party. Malloy said in a statement:

> In 2011, Republicans purposefully skewed the lines and rigged the map against the American people. The results have been clear: nearly a decade of Tea Party obstruction in Congress and devastating policies in states across the country…. The NDRC's investments in governors and state races will help fight back against GOP gerrymandering and invest in the future of the Democratic Party.

The concept was actually hatched during the 2016 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, where Malloy, Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman Rep. Ben Ray Lujan (D-New Mexico) met to talk about the group. (Politico, Oct. 17, 2016)

The NRDC Board of Directors is made up of some of Washington's top players now serving under Holder.

NRDC President Elisabeth Pearson is also the executive director of the Democratic Governors Association. The NRDC Vice President is Ali Lapp, the executive director of the House Majority PAC. Other board members are Jessica

NDRC
NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

"Those who control state governments draw the lines that shape Congress for the next decade. Fixing this redistricting problem will involve...focusing on the larger effort to win back governance. This is the path to ensuring Democrats have their rightful seats at the table in 2021."—Eric Holder

Post, the executive director of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, and Greg Speed, president of America Votes Action Fund, a Democratic Super PAC.

American Thinker editor Thomas Lifson explained the larger context of the organization's efforts:

> Redistricting, a.k.a. [g]errymandering (depending on the eye of the beholder), is now a science, thanks to the data-mining capabilities of all the Silicon Valley Big Money corporatist allies of the Democrats. Assembling masses of data from Google, Facebook, and others, they can put together districts micro-targeted with just enough Democrats to win and shove the GOP voters into 90% majority districts, shut out forever from control of state legislatures and the House of Representatives. (American Thinker, Oct. 17, 2016)

Obama and Holder have both strongly advocated for racially drawn districts, and using the Voting Rights Act for partisan advantage to create "majority minority" districts. As far back as his time in the Illinois legislature, after the 2000 Census, Obama told the Chicago Defender newspaper that, "while everyone agrees that the Hispanic population has grown, they cannot expand by taking African-American seats." (*National Review*, Feb. 20, 2017)

THE FACTUAL FLAWS OF THE BIG EXCUSE

Obama's promise to fundamentally transform America came true in an unintended way during his presidency, as he laid waste to his party's standing from Congress down through the state legislators.

He lost a total of 35 state legislative chambers during his eight years in office to new Republican majorities who could be drawing up district lines. He can't blame unfriendly maps for the loss of 13 Democratic U.S. Senate seats and 14 Democratic governors—statewide offices with no gerrymandered voting lines—during his two terms. According to the University of Virginia Center for Politics, Obama lost more seats for his party than any other two-term president in modern history. (LifeZette, Nov. 14, 2016)

Not surprising, the BIG EXCUSE of gerrymandering for the Democrats' losses doesn't stand up to a reality check.

To be sure, drawing legislative districts is a political exercise, and done to give one party an advantage. In most cases it does. But, it's in no way insurmountable. Democratic control of the U.S. House of Representatives from 1954 through 1994 was in no small part attributable to Democratic gerrymandering, but Republicans eventually broke through.

Holder complains that Republicans House candidates won barely 50 percent of total popular vote in House elections, but control 55 percent of the House seats. However, other factors are involved beyond gerrymandering in contrasting seats won vs. popular vote.

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Redistricting is now a science, thanks to the data-mining capabilities of the Silicon Valley corporatist allies of the Democrats.

Sean Trende, an elections analyst, said from 1942 to 1992, "the Democrats had a huge advantage in seats won vs. their popular-vote share, averaging 5 percent."

A 5 percentage point advantage is worth 22 house seats today. Republicans had a 4.9 percentage point advantage, worth 21 seats in last year's election. In previous years, it was smaller, as low as 2.1 percent (nine seats) in 2010 before the districts were redrawn; 4.4 points (19 seats) in 2012, and 3.8 points (17 seats) in 2014. (*National Review*, Feb. 20, 2017)

Democrats had a 3.8 percent advantage in House seats over the popular vote for House candidate in 2008, worth 15 more seats. However, we don't hear Obama or Holder questioning the legitimacy of Obamacare—a law that passed with a seven-vote margin in the House and wouldn't have without the gerrymandering advantage.

Two political science professors, Jowei Chen of the University of Michigan and Jonathan Rodden of Stanford University did a 2013 study of legislative districts that used computer simulations of precinct-by-precinct voting patterns. They determined Republicans have a "human geography" advantage. Democratic voters concentrate overwhelmingly in liberal urban districts. Republican voters more evenly distributed in the suburban, exurban, small-town, and rural districts. The researchers called this "unintentional gerrymandering," which produced an average five percentage points advantage nationally for Republicans.

LEADER OF THE RESISTANCE

Being part of the "Resistance" is the *in* thing for the Left, as even Trump's vanquished opponent Hillary Clinton declared her allegiance to the movement. She will definitely have competition if she wants to be a leader.

While there is not a designated leader of the "Resistance" *per se*, Holder is really deeply involved in the core of the resistance mission, which is defying federal law under the Trump administration. Representing California, Holder has—whether he likes it or not—put himself in league with John C. Calhoun, who also argued that states have the right to nullify federal laws they don't like.

In January, the Democratic-controlled California legislature hired him to represent them for any legal clashes they might have against the Trump administration, as it moved toward becoming a "sanctuary state" for illegal immigrants.

"Having the former attorney general of the United States brings us a lot of firepower in order to prepare to safeguard the values of the people of California," Kevin de León, the Democratic leader of the Senate, told the *New York Times*. "This means we are very, very serious."

The nation's most populous state actually has an independent bipartisan commission that draws up legislative and congressional districts. Nevertheless, two-thirds of all seats in both the state Assembly and Senate are held by Democrats, which hardly indicates more competitive elections. The Democrats also control all of the statewide offices, and was nearly singularly responsible for Hillary Clinton's popular vote win in 2016. When explaining California's sanctuary state bill, Holder said:

> California is in so many ways a trendsetter, whether it is in pop culture or in politics. That's why it was such an attractive possibility for me to go to California and work with the legislators there in

crafting their response to the Trump administration—because I think what California does gives courage to other states and other public officials in other parts of the country who might be thinking about principled opposition. (Washington Free Beacon, July 13, 2017)

Already, California Attorney General Xavier Becerra—possibly wanting to ensure he isn't overshadowed by the notoriety of Holder—and separately the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles are suing the Trump Justice Department for proposing to deny federal grants to sanctuary cities, where local law enforcement is prohibited by municipal policies from assisting federal immigration officials. The problem with sanctuary cities was illuminated after an illegal immigrant with multiple arrests murdered Kate Steinle in San Francisco in 2015, and this year when an illegal immigrant who had been arrested 20 times was charged for sexually assaulting a 65-year-old woman in Portland, Oregon.

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The problem with sanctuary cities was illuminated after an illegal immigrant with multiple arrests murdered Kate Steinle in San Francisco in 2015.

In July, Holder spoke to about 800 left-wing lawyers at a San Francisco fundraising event for the liberal nonprofit Legal Aid At Work, where he asserted the "moral arc of the universe" may be bending away from justice.

"It's the responsibility of all of us to keep our hands on that arc," Holder told the crowd. "There is fighting to be done, there are lawsuits to be brought.… You can never underestimate the power of the American people." (Washington Free Beacon, July 13, 2017)

HOLDER FOR PRESIDENT 2020

Holder is at least entertaining the possibility that tilting redistricting toward Democrats and suing the Trump administration will put him in line to be the 2020 Democratic presidential nominee.

Yahoo News reported in June that "Holder is mulling a White House bid of his own, according to three sources who have spoken to him and are familiar with his thinking."

Holder's first scandal as Obama's attorney general was stopping the prosecution of the New Black Panther party members, despite a near slam dunk case against Minister King Samir Shabazz, Malik Zulu Shabazz, and Jerry Jackson for actions at a Philadelphia polling office in 2008.

And the former attorney general didn't deny anything. Holder told Yahoo News:

> Up to now, I have been more behind-the-scenes. But that's about to change. I have a certain status as the former attorney general. A certain familiarity as the first African-American attorney general. There's a justified perception that I'm close to President Obama. So, I want to use whatever skills I have, whatever notoriety I have, to be effective in opposing things that are, at the end of the day, just bad for the country. Now is the time to be more visible. Now is the time to be heard.

He's charting his own course, and is likely to have a higher media profile in the coming months and years leading up to 2020. Yet, he'll have to explain a lot away from his public record from two Democratic Justice Departments.

In 2012, Holder's behavior was so egregious that 17 House Democrats joined Republicans in voting to hold the attorney general in contempt of Congress for obstructing the investigation into Operation Fast and Furious, a botched gun sting, in which the Justice Department allowed about 2,000 guns to flow to Mexican drug trafficking organizations, but then lost track of the guns. The operation was halted only after one of the guns was identified at the murder scene of a U.S. Border Patrol agent. The contempt citation amounted to little more than a censure, and Obama kept him on as attorney general after winning a second term.

Holder's first scandal as Obama's attorney general was stopping the prosecution of the New Black Panther party members, despite a near slam dunk case against Minister King Samir Shabazz, Malik Zulu Shabazz, and Jerry Jackson for actions at a Philadelphia polling office in 2008. They were even caught on video intimidating voters.

The New Black Panther Party case could curry favor with the far-left going into 2020. Just as governors and members of Congress like to remind old constituents of past favors, Holder could do the same regarding his tenure as attorney general, as he forged alliances with several leftwing nonprofits.

In April 2012, Holder spoke to Al Sharpton's National Action Network, where he said to the known demagogue:

> Reverend Sharpton...I am especially grateful...for your partnership, your friendship, and your tireless efforts to speak out for the voiceless, to stand up for the powerless, and to shine a light on the problems we must solve, and the promises we must fulfill. (Discover the Networks)

Holder also collaborated with Media Matters for America, a left-wing self-proclaimed "media watchdog" once run by Clinton confidante David Brock. In 2012, the *Daily Caller* obtained emails through the Freedom of Information Act that showed Holder's communications staff worked with Media Matters for America to discredit news stories critical of Justice Department scandals.

The *Daily Caller* reported:

> Dozens of pages of emails between DOJ Office of Public Affairs Director Tracy Schmaler and Media Matters staffers show Schmaler, Holder's top press defender, working...with Media Matters staffer Jeremy Holden on attacking news coverage of the New Black Panther Party voter intimidation scandal.

> And another that said, "Media Matters' Matt Gertz wrote to Schmaler asking for her help 'debunking what I think is a conservative media myth about Operation Fast and Furious.'"

It wasn't just bad press that Holder couldn't seem to handle. He was known for going after journalists during his tenure.

He went after James Risen, a reporter for the *New York Times*, and James Rosen, a reporter for Fox News. The DOJ issued a subpoena to Risen of the *Times* to force him to testify against a whistleblower. The DOJ meanwhile made Rosen of Fox News an unindicted co-conspirator in

"Reverend Sharpton...I am especially grateful...for your partnership, your friendship, and your tireless efforts to speak out for the voiceless, to stand up for the powerless, and to shine a light on the problems we must solve, and the promises we must fulfill." —Eric Holder

another case. Perhaps even worse, under Holder, the DOJ secretly obtained the Associated Press phone records and some AP personal phone lines were subject to surveillance. (*Washington Post*, May 13, 2013).

Even journalist Glenn Greenwald, no conservative, expressed qualms with Holder's attitude toward the press:

> Under U.S. law, it is not illegal to publish classified information. That fact, along with the First Amendment's guarantee of press freedoms, is what has prevented the U.S. government from ever prosecuting journalists for reporting on what the U.S. government does in secret. This newfound theory of the Obama DOJ—that a journalist can be guilty of crimes for "soliciting" the disclosure of classified information—is a means for circumventing those safeguards and criminalizing the act of investigative journalism itself. (Discover the Networks)

Perhaps being anti-media wouldn't necessarily help with liberals. But the Left is increasingly hostile toward any free speech. And for many Democrats, the fact that Holder kicked around Fox News would more than compensate for his actions against the *New York Times* and Associated Press.

In 2012, Holder—always eager to leap into identity politics—helped advise African-American pastors how to be politically active without getting in trouble with the Internal Revenue Service. He worked with the IRS's tax exempt organizations division official Peter Lorenzetti and

the Congressional Black Caucus to help train pastors at the Conference of National Black Churches. (The Daily Caller, Sept. 13, 2013)

As a matter of principle, conservatives don't mind this so long as the law applies across the board. However, this was inconsistent on two levels.

> *While Attorney General, Holder collaborated with Media Matters for America, a left-wing self-proclaimed "media watchdog" once run by Clinton confidante David Brock.*

The Democratic Party has stood solidly by the Johnson Amendment, a law that threatens churches with loss of tax exempt status if they talk about politics to the congregation. This principle apparently only applies if it doesn't help Democrats. Further, this training program occurred at the time the same IRS tax exempt organizations division was targeting Tea Party and conservative nonprofits.

As for that IRS targeting scandal, it was the Holder Justice Department that named Barbara Bosserman, a department trial attorney, to lead the investigation—despite the fact that she donated at least $6,750 to the Obama campaigns and the Democratic National Committee. Not surprisingly, the case closed with no charges.

But justice was never allowed to get in the way of partisan politics—another reason the party might owe him a more exalted role. Those favors go all the way back to the Clinton administration, where Holder served as the deputy attorney general—the number two to Janet Reno. It was Holder who helped craft a legal justification for President Bill Clinton's controversial pardons of fugitive financier Marc Rich and terrorist leaders of the Armed Forces of National Liberation, or FALN.
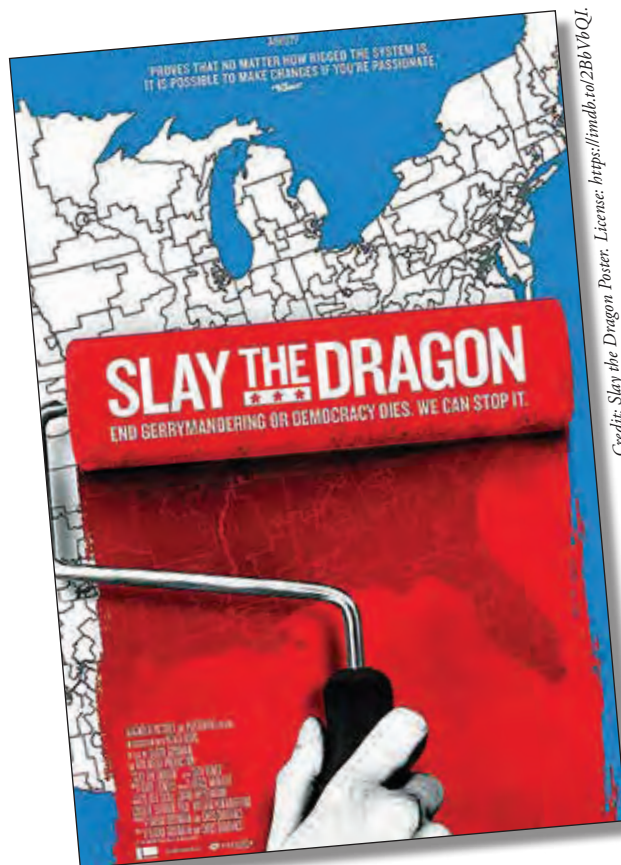
A general disregard for the rule of law, a willingness to misuse the power of government for political ends, and a brazen embrace of identity politics could make Holder a frontrunner for the Democratic presidential nomination should he throw his hat in the 2020 ring. ■

SLAY THE DRAGON: SAVE DEMOCRACY BY ELIMINATING DEMOCRACY

Summary: *Slay the Dragon is a profile of the 2018 Voters Not Politicians (VNP) redistricting amendment to the Michigan constitution. The film makes a mighty effort to conceal its major argument: When it comes to political map-making, we must save democracy by eliminating democracy. Slay the Dragon's critical supporting points are similarly hidden within ironies and misdirections. Everything about VNP—down to the name itself—was meant to convince Michigan voters they could inflict a staggering blow on the political machines. But as with the slanted portrayal in Slay the Dragon, VNP kept quiet about the fact that one of those machines was pouring a stupendously lopsided fortune into the effort to advance its own partisan objectives.*

The tale told in the new documentary *Slay the Dragon* is that all the evil in America—or at least most policy decisions leftists assume to be evil—is the fault of political maps drawn by the people's elected representatives—that is, state legislatures. The film is a deceptively presented apologia for removing representative government from this process. Although the United States has survived and thrived despite two centuries of the partisan map drawing named after former Massachusetts Gov. Elbridge Gerry (who later became President James Madison's vice president), the producers of *Slay the Dragon* argue gerrymandering has now become an assault on democracy itself.

The film makes a mighty effort to conceal its major argument: When it comes to political mapmaking, we must save democracy by eliminating democracy. Similarly, *Slay the Dragon*'s critical supporting points are hidden within ironies and misdirections. At some points, the film devolves into *Slay the Strawman*.

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Ken Braun is CRC's senior investigative researcher and authors profiles for InfluenceWatch.org and the Capital Research *magazine.*

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Myth of the Grassroots Underdogs

The movie's central fable is the portrayal of a supposed grassroots underdog army of apolitical Michigan activists whose 2018 alteration to the state's constitution put political redistricting decisions into the hands of an unelected commission. Just over a half hour into the film, one top staffer on what became the Proposal 2 ballot campaign declares his committee—Voters Not Politicians—will be decisively outspent by the opposition. He predicts Voters Not Politicians would be "lucky" to face a funding disparity of merely four to one. He confidently fears it will probably be 10 or 20 to one.
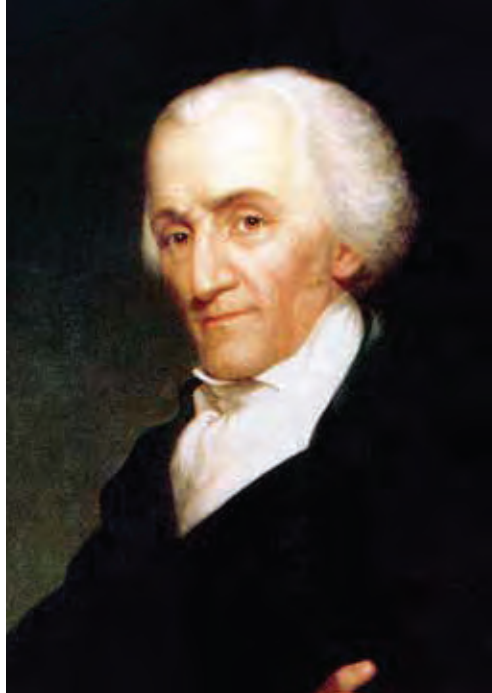
What you won't learn from watching *Slay the Dragon* is that there was indeed a better than four to one funding disparity . . . *but it went the other way*. Keep this undisclosed fact in mind, as it informs many of the film's deceptions.

Voters Not Politicians received $13.9 million in its quest to pass Proposal 2, versus an opposition that raised $3.2 million. In its report on this development, *Bridge Magazine*, a Michigan political publication for big government sympathizers, characterized the $13.9 million as a "staggering" total.

These figures were reported 11 days before the November 2018 election. *Slay the Dragon* shows the Voters Not Politicians campaign all the way through its victorious party on election night yet never corrects the record. The film even doubles down on the misperception, showing an anti–Proposal 2 video as an example of what the supposedly outmuscled grassroots heroes were up against.

The charitable interpretation of this omission is to say it is an example of recklessly incompetent propaganda. But that's much too generous. There is no innocent excuse for professional filmmakers documenting this story from start to finish to somehow mangle the fundraising disparity into exactly the opposite of what happened.

It wasn't a mere fact-checking error. The producers of *Slay the Dragon* flat out lied, deliberately disrespecting their audi-

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ence and seeking to turn the viewers into misinformed fools.

The Big Money Funders

There was a powerful motive for telling that lie. Looking into the truth about the big money that poured into Voters Not Politicians would raise an obvious question about *where* that money was coming from.

The largest funder (at $5.5 million) was the Sixteen Thirty Fund, a left-wing lobbying and advocacy fund that *Politico* credited with spending "$140 million" on "Democratic and left-leaning causes" during the November 2018 midterms. Sixteen Thirty is managed through the massive Arabella Advisors network of left-wing advocacy organizations. (Arabella Advisors is the subject of *Big Money in Dark Shadows*, a comprehensive research report from the Capital Research Center.)

Another $1.4 million in combined funding was given by four decisively left-leaning or Democratic Party–favoring funds. The National Redistricting Action Fund, the advocacy arm of the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, kicked in $250,000. An affiliate of the SEIU, a major left-leaning labor union, gave $500,000. The Quadrivium Foundation, also a generous donor to the left-leaning Environmental Defense Fund, gave $500,000. And the big labor bosses at the National Education Association chipped in $125,000.

With a donation of $5.1 million, the Action Now Initiative was nearly as generous as the Sixteen Thirty Fund. The *Bridge Magazine* report revealed that the busybody Action Now was also the source of funding for a proposal to place a new tax on sugary soft drinks in Oregon and similar redistricting proposals in other states.

In revealing the big financial advantage from lefty funders enjoyed by Voters Not Politicians, *Bridge Magazine* noted that the group had been promoting itself "as a bipartisan coalition fueled by a grassroots army bent on reforming Michigan's redistricting system." Scene after scene rolls by in *Slay the Dragon* to reinforce this perception. Campaign

leader Katie Fahey is introduced in the film as a political neophyte who doesn't "do politics for a job." During an interview on *Off the Record*, a public television political roundtable in Michigan, she cleverly pivots from a question about whether big money will be raised by her campaign, sticking with an answer that keeps her amateur-hour, grass-roots image in place.

But beyond the truckloads of lefty money raining down on Ms. Fahey's project, there is more that rattles apart her "grassroots" mythology, yet—and this becomes a theme—is conspicuously absent from *Slay the Dragon*:

- In a short report the morning after the November 2016 election, the Associated Press managed to find and quote only one example of the dejected attendees at the ill-fated Hillary Clinton campaign victory party in New York City: Katie Fahey. "My disappointment makes me not trust the rest of the world," said Fahey, who had flown to the event from Michigan. That very day, *Bridge Magazine* reports Fahey began floating social media posts for the idea that became Voters Not Politicians.

- Ten months later the *Detroit News* reported Voters Not Politicians was working with . . . well . . . politicians: (1) a former state government official who had given nearly $4,000 to Democratic gubernatorial nominees; (2) a former Democratic candidate for the state legislature with his own history of donations to other Democratic candidates, and; (3) Joe Schwarz, a former Republican congressman from Michigan with a high-profile history of endorsing Democrats in top-of-ticket races (most recently Hillary Clinton in 2016 and current Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2018).

Katie Fahey may not literally have been doing professional political work before launching into her richly funded left-wing crusade. The *Bridge Magazine* report says she was "working in environmental sustainability." But at a minimum she was a strongly partisan supporter of Hillary Clinton. And the least suspicious characterization of what happened afterward is that she became the Forrest Gump of Michigan politics, fortuitously tripping over board members friendly to Democrats and a stupendous pile of partisan-left money that she used to bury her opposition.

Life is indeed a box of chocolates, and you never know what you'll find. But if it contradicts the myth that Voters Not Politicians was a bunch of underfunded, grassroots under-dogs, you won't find it in *Slay the Dragon.*

The Big Business Myth

What you *will* find is a tired old conspiracy about the Left's favorite bogeymen, such as the Koch brothers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. *Slay the Dragon* singles out those two and others as donors behind an effort by Republicans to win majority control of numerous state legislatures during the 2010 election cycle and then use those victories to redraw congressional and state legislative boundaries. Michigan was one of those states.

This is neither news nor nefarious. Democrats and their big donors also make an extra special effort to seize control of state legislatures and gubernatorial offices every 10 years. But you'll wait nearly 20 more minutes after hearing about the Koch dollars before *Slay the Dragon* provides the film's one and only (grudging, halfway) admission of this fact: "In a few states where Democrats controlled maps, they did their own gerrymanders."

This raises a question that reveals another of the movie's major misdirections: How much did those Republicans and their business allies really spend? The tally unveiled in *Slay the Dragon* pegs it at $30 million for the nationwide effort.
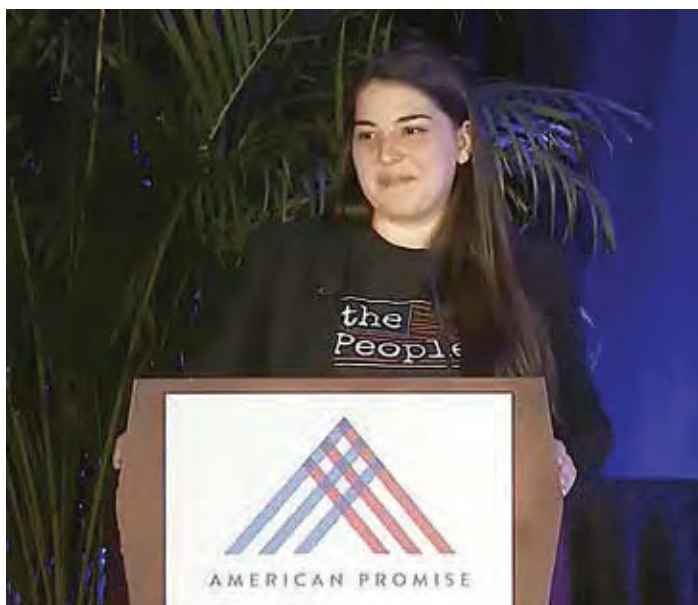
So now, remember the $13.9 million raised by Voters Not Politicians just for the 2018 Michigan ballot measure? The allegedly grassroots Michigan campaign was able to raise almost half of what Republicans supposedly spent for the entire nation.

More striking still is that the Republican cabal of national donors from back in 2010 was apparently so nonplussed by this 2018 threat to their accomplishment in Michigan that they chipped in no more than $3.2 million to try to save it?

But again, you wouldn't know this from watching *Slay the Dragon*. The film sets up the Michigan Chamber of Commerce as a local villain. Another truth withheld from the viewer is that the Michigan Chamber gave a comparatively tiny $100,000 of the $3.2 million raised by the committee that organized against Proposal 2. Similarly, the chamber

> *Just the production budget for* Slay the Dragon *may have exceeded what the Michigan Chamber of Commerce spent trying to stop Proposal 2.*

Campaign leader Katie Fahey is introduced in the film as a political neophyte who doesn't "do politics for a job." During an interview on Off the Record, she cleverly pivots from a question about whether big money will be raised by her campaign, sticking with an answer that keeps her amateur-hour, grassroots image in place.

spent another $135,000 in an earlier (failed) legal crusade to keep the proposal off the ballot.

Just the production budget for *Slay the Dragon* may have exceeded what the Michigan Chamber of Commerce spent trying to stop Proposal 2.

As noted earlier, the $13.9 million raised by Voters Not Politicians to pass the proposal dwarfed the $3.2 million raised to stop it. Almost $3 million of that $3.2 million was given by the Michigan Freedom Fund, an avowedly conservative, limited government committee that has been active in Michigan on a variety of issues over many years. A reader that's gotten this far won't be surprised to learn that, even though the Michigan Freedom Fund provided nearly all the financial arrows aimed to slay Proposal 2, this is yet another subject *Slay the Dragon* did not cover.

The true story of Proposal 2 wasn't the fiction featuring outgunned Katie Fahey versus the Koch brothers and the Michigan Chamber of Commerce. In truth, the battle was a mismatched financial skirmish between a reasonably well-funded limited government advocacy organization on one side and Fahey's stupendously rich, left-leaning ballot committee on the other. That's not the message advanced in *Slay the Dragon* because telling it that way would have killed off the strawmen the film's producers needed to slay.

Revenge of the Sore Losers

Those strawmen are needed because they advance the film's message that Republicans have been winning elections they should be losing and thus taking unfair advantage of the political system. To defend this point, *Slay the Dragon* spins the story of two elections: 2008 and 2010.

In the *Slay the Dragon* account, Republicans are knocked back on their heels after President Obama is elected in 2008, taking with him 53 percent of the popular vote and both chambers of Congress for Democrats. Just over 15 minutes into the film this outcome is portrayed as an epochal historic breaking point where Republicans become an endangered species for the foreseeable future. Forty minutes later this assertion is reinforced with an interview subject declaring Republicans to be demographic dinosaurs, no longer capable of winning a fair fight in a nation that has become less white and thus irretrievably more left-leaning.

In this version of the legend, the 2010 U.S. Census and political redistricting that followed in 2011 should have delivered a decade of mostly Democratic majorities in Congress and many state legislatures. Instead, Republicans and their donors responded to the 2008 challenge with Operation Red Map, the previously described $30 million plot to pull off strategic victories in state legislative and gubernatorial races during the 2010 midterm election.

The allegation is that this unjustly stole the mapmaking power from Democrats. *Slay the Dragon* presents left-leaning journalist David Daley to inform viewers this $30 million was possibly the biggest bargain in American political history.

But why did Democrats, supposedly holding a royal flush of electoral advantages after 2008, fail to counter the Republican move with their own relatively low-budget plan to win important races in 2010? It wasn't as if there was no warning: The U.S. Census and subsequent political redistricting have been occurring every decade for the past two centuries. Both major parties knew the state-level races in 2010 were critical. Anticipating and executing in this environment, particularly from Democrats' alleged position of popular support, is the bare minimum that might be expected of an organized political party, else why does it exist?

In addressing these points, the film banks again on a credulous audience.

First, there is the *Slay the Dragon* interview with Margaret Dickson, a former Democratic state senator from North Carolina who was beaten during the 2010 election. More than 200 years earlier, during the 1800 U.S. presidential election, a surrogate of challenger Thomas Jefferson attacked

In Slay the Dragon *Margaret Dickson gins up a mighty affectation of either ignorance or insincerity as she tells the camera that her campaign "had no idea what was about to hit us," "nobody had ever seen anything like it," and mailings from the opposition were arriving "every day."*

David Daley makes an appearance to provide a wide-eyed account of how Republicans used census data and computer programs to draw maps that advantaged them. The point is reinforced by Stephen Wolf, another left-leaning journalist from the *Daily Kos*. Both advance the notion that these were new developments.

These assertions are as insincere as Dickson being confused by aggressive campaigning. The politicians in the majority after each U.S. Census draw the political maps and have done so at least since the early 1800s, when the term "gerrymandering" was born and almost half a century before the Republican Party even existed. Sophisticated mapping software has been used for the last few redistricting cycles and like all software it has gotten better, but census data were being used long before that to draw these maps.

incumbent President John Adams as "a hideous hermaphroditical character which has neither the force and firmness of a man, not the gentleness and sensibility of a woman." Since at least then, competitive political races involving less exalted characters have featured rough attacks and counter attacks. It was as predictable as a sunrise that Republicans in North Carolina would run an aggressive campaign in 2010 against an incumbent lawmaker they wished to defeat.

But this reality was apparently lost on Margaret Dickson. In *Slay the Dragon* she gins up a mighty affectation of either ignorance or insincerity as she tells the camera that her campaign "had no idea what was about to hit us," "nobody had ever seen anything like it," and mailings from the opposition were arriving "every day."

Did Democrats attack her opponent as well? Did her side just stick to happy talk and never say anything bad about the Republican? *Slay the Dragon* doesn't raise, let alone answer, those questions. An obtuse viewer is left with the impression that negative campaigns were first introduced to American politics by Republicans during the 2010 election cycle. A less naïve observer will conclude Dickson is a sore loser who put up an inferior effort when the stakes were high.

More faux outrage is presented in fables told about what Republicans did with their wins following the 2010 election.

There was nothing particularly unique about how this all happened in 2010.

It might be fair to debate whether the elected representatives of the people should control drawing these maps, whether those lawmakers should be adhering to different mapping rules, and how much harm gerrymandering does. But movie isn't aimed at addressing this argument—*Slay the Dragon* needs villains, and those villains need to be Republicans. The film relentlessly asserts that Republicans have uniquely abused the map-drawing power to win elections they should not win and that once in power the GOP politicians inflict uniquely horrible policies.

The very first moments of the movie advance a profoundly deceptive and evil assertion that gerrymandering after 2010 permitted Michigan Republicans to allow lead into the drinking water of Flint. Hey Margaret Dickson, how's *that* for negative campaigning? Do the lefties play that rough in North Carolina?

The Myth of the Obsolete GOP

Slay the Dragon more innocently stumbles into some of the fictions because of a lie the filmmakers have told themselves. Contrary to their mythology, the 2008 election results did not presage a long-term political majority favoring their big

> *Slay the Dragon needs villains, and those villains need to be Republicans.*

government ideology, nor electoral obsolescence for Republicans. It didn't even ring in a short-term trend.

The film portrays the 2010 midterm election as just an isolated success in state legislative and gubernatorial races by Republicans aiming to seize control of redistricting. It was far more than that. Republicans won an outright majority of all votes cast for candidates from every political party in all 435 congressional seats in 2010, trouncing Democrats by more than 5.7 million nationwide. Just in Michigan, the GOP advantage over Democrats for all congressional seats was more than 250,000. Republican congressional candidates even scored the most votes in New Jersey. Republicans picked up 63 additional U.S. House seats in 2010 and control of the chamber, the largest changeover of seats in 72 years.

The central argument of *Slay the Dragon* is that Republicans needed to draw biased redistricting maps in 2011 because the party had scant hope of otherwise winning congressional majorities. This premise was demolished before the mapmaking ever occurred. More pointedly, Republicans won control of the mapmaking after the 2010 midterms precisely because they were able to win a majority when it counted.

And that's not the most powerful evidence against the "dead GOP" narrative. Googling "Hillary Clinton won the popular vote" will return more than 69,000 results. Although obviously a very trendy talking point on the left, it is a rhetorical security blanket with big holes.

The 2016 presidential election featured the two highest unfavorable rankings for major party nominees in the history of Gallup polling, with Trump disliked by 61 percent and Clinton by 52 percent. Either running against just about anyone else would likely have faced electoral annihilation. Democrat Walter Mondale, who lost 49 states to Ronald Reagan in 1984, did so despite a 66 percent favorable rating from Gallup. Republican Mitt Romney, loser to Barack Obama in 2012, had a 55 percent favorable rating.

The dislike for Trump and Clinton produced unusually high votes for minor-party candidates. Libertarian Gary Johnson, the former Republican governor of New Mexico, took almost 4.5 million votes, besting his 2012 total by more than 3.2 million. Less dramatically, Green Party nominee Jill Stein polled slightly less than 1.5 million, improving on her 2012 total by almost a million.

The U.S. presidential high-water mark for the Green Party was the 2000 election, when Ralph Nader won 2.9 million votes nationwide and was widely blamed by Democrats for denying Al Gore a win in Florida, which could have secured him the presidency. Similarly, Libertarians are often credibly blamed for draining votes from Republicans, never more so than in 2016 when the ticket featured two former GOP governors.

Assigning the 2016 Libertarian votes to Trump and the Green votes to Clinton gives the hypothetical libertarian/Republican "smaller government" coalition the lead in the popular vote (with more than 49 percent of the total votes cast) and provides Trump with 20 additional electoral college votes because he would have added wins in Nevada, Minnesota, and New Hampshire. Further adding the popular votes of independent candidate Evan McMullin (a former U.S. House Republican staffer who became popular with many otherwise GOP voters) and Constitution Party candidate Darrell Castle (another right-of-center candidate) yields more than 50 percent of all votes cast for U.S. President in 2016.

Candidates running on small-government conservative or libertarian ideologies won an outright majority of the popular vote in 2016. Hillary Clinton's *plurality* was achieved due to the unprecedented and extraordinary unpopularity of the Republican nominee she was lucky enough to run against, but still incapable of defeating.

Deeply flawed though it may be, the "GOP is demographically dead" myth spun by *Slay the Dragon* is essential to the film's argument that Republicans had to engage in some historically unprecedented level of gerrymandering to ward off their demise. Essentially arguing the Republican mapmakers were cheating, the moviemakers needed a motive for the alleged evildoing. But exhibit A in their evidence is bunk.

About Those Maps

There's another problem with the "Republicans drew cheater maps" argument: They weren't very good at it. Once again, the selective half of the story told in *Slay the Dragon* turns the truth on its head.

More than an hour in, the film reveals a 2011 email exchange between Bob LaBrant of the Michigan Chamber

Figure 1. Michigan Congressional Districts for the 113th Congress.

Credit: nationalatlas.gov. License: data.gov.

many of the immediate northern and southern suburbs of Detroit. It was relatively easy for congressional mapmakers in 2011 to gather a disproportionate share of Michigan's Democrats into a tightly drawn little box in the southeast corner of the state. It wasn't some clever manipulation of census data. Democratic voters did almost all the hard work before the mapping computers ever fired up.

This relatively tiny patch of the state's land contains 28 percent of its population, but roughly 35 percent of its Democratic voters (as measured by the 2018 midterm congressional election) and just 14 percent of the Republican voters. Overall, it voted 71.8 percent Democratic in the last congressional election. The Republican in the *least* Democratic seat of the bunch (the 9th) still got less than 37 percent of the vote. While the internal lines between these four districts are jagged and ugly (as they must be when densely packed communities need to be divided evenly by population) the outside borders of the whole provide a reasonably compact representation of where a large hunk of the people of Michigan live.

of Commerce and Jeff Timmer, a Michigan political advisor and redistricting professional affiliated with Republicans. [Disclosure: Jeff has been a friend for more than 30 years but was not consulted for this film review.] In the back-and-forth messages, Timmer presents maps he says will provide a "solid 9-5" congressional delegation from Michigan.

Smoking gun? Proof the Michigan Chamber of Commerce and Republicans were cooking up extra biased maps?

Not exactly.

Michigan's Democratic voters have been cooking up their own biased maps by stubbornly living next to each other.

Four of Michigan's most densely populated (and thus geographically smallest) current congressional districts—the 9th, 12th, 13th and 14th—are packed together in the southeast corner of the state (see Figure 1). Taken as a whole, these four encompass the entire city of Detroit, the city of Ann Arbor, most of the suburbs in between the two, plus

Could a Democratic map maker have gotten a slightly more favorable map for Democrats? Sure. Would that have happened if Democrats had won the map-drawing power in 2010? Absolutely. Would it change the fact that it's tough to geographically unpack and divide-up Michigan's tightly clustered Democratic voters? No.

An interview with LaBrant shown in *Slay the Dragon* has him briefly saying "Democrats tend to cluster in urban cities" and "Republicans are more spread out." The film makes zero effort to examine how profoundly correct this is or even to challenge the assertion. It's a key reason why a representative map might be expected to sometimes return nine Republicans out of the 14 seats. But LaBrant's highly relevant point is dismissed with a horribly misleading statement that appears on the screen: "He [LaBrant] blames skewed election results on geography."

And the maps didn't always work. In the 2018 midterm election, Republicans won only seven of Michigan's 14 congressional seats. Two years earlier, a limited government

majority of Donald Trump and the Libertarian Party candidate won more than 50 percent of the vote in Michigan. Right now, Democrats hold a 7-6 advantage over Republicans in the state's congressional delegation. (Shortly after the 2018 election, Republican Congressman Justin Amash declared himself an independent.)

But once again *Slay the Dragon* fails to reveal that the Michigan map didn't return a Republican majority or mention the 2018 election results at all. It's unpleasantly easy to run out of original ways to keep pointing out the deceptions that repeatedly leave the film's viewers measurably more ignorant about the subject than if they had merely read the back of a box of Froot Loops.

"Way to [expletive deleted] Change the Michigan Constitution!"

Near the end of *Slay the Dragon*, while giving a victory speech after passage of Proposal 2, Katie Fahey reads aloud the opening sentence of Article I of the Michigan constitution: "All political power is inherent in the people."

That word "all" is particularly meaningful. Michigan's constitution errs strongly on the side of empowering the people—the voters. Unlike many states (and as demonstrated by the passage of Proposal 2), Michigan voters have the unilateral authority to amend their constitution and even to pass or reject laws without the support of lawmakers or the governor. Changes to the document have generally enhanced this power: A 1978 amendment requires voter approval for any increase in the taxing power of a local government. And every policymaking official in state government derives all his or her authority from a vote of the people, either directly (elected officials) or indirectly (policymakers appointed by elected officials).

The political redistricting process was not an exception. After prior decennial U.S. Census years, state representa-

tives and senators passed mapping plans designed to adhere to legal restrictions originally mandated by the Michigan Supreme Court (also an elected body) and later codified into law. Those maps had to be approved by the governor and were still often subjected to state court challenges before being ratified. Directly elected representatives of the people, from all three branches of state government, were the authorities at every stage of this lawmaking endeavor.

Proposal 2 (now Article IV § 6 of the Michigan constitution) removed representative democracy from this process. In its place is an unelected 13-member redistricting commission selected through random draws from pools of self-appointed applicants. This will be the rarest of political beasts empowered by a document that otherwise vests "all political power" in the people: a lawmaking authority selected with neither a direct nor an indirect connection to a vote of those people.

Not 10 minutes before Fahey is shown speaking about the empowerment of the people, another scene in *Slay the Dragon* shows a hearing in front of the Michigan Supreme Court. One of the justices is briefly heard voicing a concern over whether the proposal disenfranchises 10 million people in favor of empowering just 13 of them. The film does not reveal how (or if) this concern was addressed, let alone attempt to resolve the irony.

Explicit empowerment of major political parties is another ironic vandalism inflicted by Proposal 2.

Before Fahey and Voters Not Politicians got into the act, the only references to political parties in the Michigan constitution were *restrictions* on their power. Describing the membership of four gubernatorially appointed boards and commissions, the document repeatedly prohibits majority control for "the same political party." (Each of these boards has an even number of seats).

Otherwise, these bodies may be comprised exclusively of minor-party representatives or members of no discernible party affiliation at all. Before passage of Proposal 2, no political party of any size was given any power at all by the Michigan constitution.

But the new redistricting commission requires that three pools of applicants be created, with two coming from persons who affiliate with "major parties" (i.e., "one of the two political parties with the largest representation in the legislature"). The third pool is to be comprised of persons who affiliate with neither major party. Through a process of random selections, each of the major parties will receive four representatives on the commission, and the supposedly independent pool will provide five more.

Neither the term "major parties" nor the notion of same occurs in any other section of the Michigan constitution. Passage of Proposal 2 resulted in unprecedented recognition for Michigan's two most powerful political parties and for the first time *infused them with constitutionally protected authority*. This unique outcome in a document vesting "all political power" in the people doesn't get mentioned in *Slay the Dragon*, and it obviously wasn't a selling point promoted to the voters by … (ahem) … Voters Not Politicians.

Instead, the film repeatedly portrays Fahey and Voters Not Politicians as selling an "independent" commission. Although deceptive, that's not an accident. Support for a third major political party has been at or near 50 percent in Gallup polling for more than a decade and began reliably bouncing near 60 percent after the 2012 election. This furious resentment with the performance and influence of the two largest parties was surely some—and possibly almost all—of the fuel that fired support for Proposal 2.

Everything about Voters Not Politicians—down to the name itself—was meant to convince Michigan voters they could inflict a staggering blow on the political machines. But as with the slanted portrayal in *Slay the Dragon*, it kept quiet about the fact that one of those big machines was pouring a stupendously lopsided fortune into the effort to advance its own partisan objectives.

At the end of her victory speech in *Slay the Dragon*, Fahey shouts enthusiastically to the crowd: "Way to [expletive deleted] change the Michigan Constitution!" Said with angry sarcasm, this would have been a fitting statement to end a profoundly deceptive film. ◼

THE MYTH OF NONPARTISAN DISTRICTS: AN EXPERIMENT IN REDISTRICTING REFORM

Summary: *Over the past few years, the process of redrawing congressional boundaries based on the ten-year census has come increasingly under attack—largely by the Democratic Party. To test their objections, CRC's research director Michael Watson conducted a thought experiment to determine just how much current congressional district maps "unduly favor" one party over another. He also considered whether "independent" redistricting commissions produce districts that reflect their statewide electorates. What he found has surprised many—particularly those who argue for independent commissions to replace an inherently political process.*

Michael Watson of Capital Research Center testifies before the Pennsylvania State House on Redistricting, September 18, 2019.

Introduction

Democrats and interest groups aligned with their political interests are demanding major revisions to the way elections are held for the U.S. House of Representatives. A bill known as H.R. 1 contains the House Democrats' desired changes. The proposed law would require all states to set the boundaries of their congressional districts by using purportedly independent redistricting commissions. The Democrats and their allies claim this provision would ensure that congressional redistricting would not "unduly favor or disfavor any political party" when "considered on a Statewide basis."

That raises two questions: First, how much do current congressional district maps "unduly favor" one party or another? Second, do the "independent" redistricting commissions already operating in California, Washington, Idaho, and Arizona in fact draw district maps that produce state-level proportionality among the parties—or at least more state-level proportionality than in states that do not purportedly independent commissions to draw the districts?

This report analyzes those questions by looking at real-world election results for the House of Representatives from 2010 through 2018 and then applying a simplified version of the procedure used by many countries to allocate their representatives to the European Parliament. That European procedure is known as the "D'Hondt method." It allocates seats proportionally to competing parties, based on the total votes cast in the jurisdiction.

This kind of proportionality is advocated by left-of-center groups such as FairVote, pundits such as Matthew Yglesias of Vox, and politicians such as Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA).

If one takes the view of the Democrats and their allies, a state with multiple congressional seats "should" elect a delegation of representatives with a Democratic-Republican ratio that matches the proportion of the total votes cast in the state for Democrats and Republicans. Otherwise, the state's district maps provide "undue favor" to one party.

Interestingly, given the Democrats' insistence on passing H.R. 1 to remedy gravely "unfair" districts maps, we find that the present Congress already has essentially the same partisan breakdown that it would have if the 2018 vote totals had been run through a D'Hondt allocation calculator

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to allocate state congressional delegations: The Democratic caucus would have won an identical 235 seats.

Using a D'Hondt allocation for the elections from 2010 through 2016, we find those Congresses would have had smaller Republican majorities than they did in real life. Yet the partisan control of the House in each year would not have changed—not even in 2012, when Republican candidates received fewer aggregate votes than Democrats.

Another major finding repudiates the idea that states that use purportedly independent commissions to draw congressional districts end up more "fair"—that is, produce state delegations that are closer to the state's proportion of the Democratic and Republican votes—than do states that draw their districts under a legislative, judicial, or politician-commission system. From 2010 through 2018, states with "independent" commissions deviated no less, and in the current Congress deviate far more, from the D'Hondt proportional allocation than states that did not use such commissions.

California—long a model for left-of-center electoral "reforms," including independent redistricting commissions, top-two primaries, and extended voting periods—has been especially "unfair" for election after election, when judged by the proportional-representation standard. In all the election cycles studied, California deviated by at least 9 percentage points in favor of excess Democrats (5 of its 53 seats) in each election. In the 2018 election, California produced a dramatically disproportionate result, returning the Democrats an "extra" ten seats relative to the statewide vote proportion.

A caveat: If the proportional-representation system that we used to calculate the present study's experimental "results" were actually used in real-world elections, that change in election rules would likely cause voters to change their behavior. That means real-world results would likely not precisely match our experimental findings.

But that helps indicate that the proposals demanded in H.R. 1 are not in the interest of increasing the representativeness of the Congress. Instead, they are in the interest of the political power of the Democratic Party and its very effective redistricting-related legal machine.

Apportionment of seats in the legislature is a fundamentally political act; there is no "scientific" way to determine how communities and political ideals should be contested. Therefore, America should leave the question of representation to

the political branches and to legislation, not to faux-scientific legal baby-splitting.

Background

The results of the 2010 elections gave the Republican Party more than just a number of governorships and control of the U.S. House of Representatives. As the party took majorities in several state legislatures—including some, such as North Carolina, that they had not controlled since the nineteenth century—this gave Republicans the ability to influence congressional redistricting to a degree that the GOP had not experienced in decades.

Surprising no one and in keeping with American political traditions of all parties dating back at least to the reapportionment following the second U.S. Census in 1810, the newly Republican-led state legislatures drew redistricting maps that favored themselves. The United States, like the U.K., Canada, and India, elects its lower house of the legislature by first-past-the-post voting (except Maine since 2018, which follows Australia in using preferential voting) in single-member constituencies. One consequence of such a system is that defining the constituency grants an advantage or disadvantage to one or another party based on its demographic and political-economic characteristics.

> *America should leave the question of representation to the political branches and to legislation, not to faux-scientific legal baby-splitting.*

The Republican-drawn maps outraged Democrats, who had enjoyed an uninterrupted majority in the House from 1955 until 1995, in part thanks to congressional district maps drawn by Democrat-controlled legislatures. Since the decennial reapportionment, Democratic interest groups—most prominently former Attorney General Eric Holder's National Democratic Redistricting Committee—have filed numerous lawsuits attacking the Republican-drawn maps and legislative-led redistricting in general.

H.R. 1, the House Democrats' omnibus election-rules proposal, purports to address concerns about partisan redistricting with a provision requiring all states to adopt an "independent redistricting commission" similar to those used to draw congressional districts in Washington, Idaho, Arizona, and California. H.R. 1 claims to seek districts that "shall not, when considered on a Statewide basis, unduly favor or disfavor any political party."

But before one can assess the likely outcome of either judicially mandated changes to the House election system

or legislative revisions to the system, one should assess the current situation completely, rather than on the selective basis chosen by most partisan commentators. To determine the effect of districting on partisan strength in the U.S. House, this analysis considers a "control" condition; namely, the state-level allocation of seats by proportional representation using the D'Hondt allocation rule employed by most countries sending representatives to the European Parliament. This control creates a baseline from which one can assess the potential impact of district lines on the outcomes of recent House elections. Additionally, some left-of-center groups such as FairVote, pundits such as Matthew Yglesias of Vox, and politicians such as Rep. Don Beyer (D-VA) have advocated the adoption of a proportional system to replace single-member districts.

Methodology

This analysis relies on a handful of general rules and special rules for unusual cases created by certain state-level policies and situations. It attempts to simulate the results of U.S. House elections based on two principles: proportional representation under D'Hondt's allocation formula by state and the real-world vote tallies from the general elections of 2010 through 2018.

D'Hondt's method of proportional representation is a commonly used method of assigning parliamentary seats in elections that use proportional representation. It is most prominently used by most European Union countries to allocate their representatives to the European Parliament. The D'Hondt rule assigns seats proportionally based on the concept of "votes per seat." Taken simply, seat assignment functions as a sort of "auction," with "bids" for each individual seat based

D'Hondt Allocation

The following chart shows the D'Hondt "bidding process" for seats among four parties (the Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, and Independents considered together as a party) using the real-world results of the House elections in Colorado in 2018.

Party	Votes	Bid 1	Bid 2	Bid 3	Bid 4	Bid 5	Bid 6	Bid 7
DEM	1,343,211	1,343,211	671,605.5	447,737.00	335,802.8	268,642.2	223,868.5	191887.3
GOP	1,079,772	1,079,772	539,886.0	359,924.00	269,943.0	215,954.4	179,962.0	154,253.1
LIB	58,769	58,769	29,384.5	19,589.67				
IND	32,155	32,155	16,077.5	10,718.33				

Each party makes an initial bid. Since the Democrats received the most votes for their first seat, the first seat is allocated to the Democrats. The second seat goes to the Republicans: Since they seek their first seat (bid 1) while the Democrats seek their second seat (bid 2), the GOP can bid its full vote total while the Democrats must divide theirs by two. The third seat is allocated to the Democrats, since their bid two is larger than the GOP's bid two or any of the minor parties' bid one; the fourth to the Republicans since their bid two is larger than the Democrats' bid 3, and so on until all seven seats are allocated four-three to the Democrats and Republicans as shown below.

Allocation Order		
Seat	Party	Bid
1	DEM	1,343,211.0
2	GOP	1,079,772.0
3	DEM	671,605.5
4	GOP	539,886.0
5	DEM	447,737.0
6	GOP	359,924.0
7	DEM	335,802.8

The D'Hondt method's preference for assigning seats based on a proportional equivalence of votes cast per seat won is clearly visible in the marginal "bids" for the Republicans and Democrats; the Democrats "pay" only 24,000 votes fewer for their marginal seat than the Republicans do—7 percent of the 336,000 votes per seat. In fact, referring back to the main table, if Colorado had nine seats to award, the difference in votes per seat would be only about 1,300 votes on 269,000 votes per seat (the difference between the Democrats' Bid 5 and the Republicans' Bid 4)—a variance of approximately 0.5 percent.

In the interests of securing the most proportional control, no "threshold," or minimum percentage of votes to start "bidding" for seats, was employed in the analysis.

on total votes cast for a party divided by the number of seats the party has already claimed plus one, until all seats are assigned. D'Hondt's formula seeks to equalize (to the extent possible given the size of the legislature) the number of votes cast per seat a party wins.

This experiment simulates a "closed-list" election, in which all votes for a party yield seats to candidates in the order selected by the party, to avoid the complication of personal votes in an "open-list" election. It also assigns each state as a single constituency to prevent complications from sub-districting; this approach is used by some but not all countries sending representatives to the European Parliament.

The general rules are as follows and apply to each election analyzed:

1. Votes cast by party in each state are recorded as tabulated by the clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives' official report of the elections, with exceptions as noted in the special rules for states where some seats reported no vote totals and in states with unusual voting systems.

2. For states with a single congressional district, consistent with the European Parliament's rule for its single single-member constituency (representing the German-speaking Community in Belgium), the real-world first-past-the-post outcome is assumed to carry through. In only one case, the race for South Dakota's At-Large district in 2010, did the real-world winner receive less than an outright (50 percent plus one) majority that would ensure the result would hold under any plausible electoral system.

3. Calculation of the seat allocation by D'Hondt's rule with no minimum percentage "threshold" (see sidebar) to receive seats was conducted using the publicly available Election Calculator created by Yavuz Oruc, a electrical and computer engineering professor at the University of Maryland.

4. For simplicity, Independents, write-ins, and No Party Affiliation candidates were treated as if they were a party.

5. Votes in uncontested races or runoff races involving two members of the same party under "California rules top-two" for which vote totals were reported are treated as valid votes for the party.

6. Reported blank votes, over-votes, "scattering" votes, and other null ballots were excluded from the totals.

Special rules are necessary for some situations created by state electoral rules and special circumstances.

1. During the period analyzed, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and most importantly Florida had races with an unopposed candidate for which vote totals were not reported. For Florida 2018, Oklahoma 2016, Oklahoma 2014, and Louisiana and Oklahoma 2010, vote totals for a Senate race representative of the state's general House outlook were used to calculate the seat distribution. For Florida in 2010 through 2016, due to the unrepresentativeness of proxy races to the House results, the seats not reported were treated as if they did not exist, with the seats removed from the party that won them in real life for purposes of comparison.

2. New York uses multiple-ballot-line elections, in which voters may cast votes for the same candidate on any of many "party lines." While some parties (like the Democrats and the Working Families Party or the Republicans and the Conservative Party) tend to endorse the same candidates they do not always, and other parties (such as the Independence Party) endorse candidates of both major parties or run their own candidates. For simplicity, each party was treated as its own party for purposes of seat allocation.

3. Where states reported votes for a ballot line easily identified as associated with a party (e.g., Republican Tax Revolt for Republicans in New York and Democratic-Farmer-Labor for Democrats in Minnesota), those votes were combined with the vote for the identifiable major party. This is the same practice used by Germany to assign national seats to its permanent union between the two longstanding center-right parties, the Christian Democratic Union (which runs in 15 of the country's 16 federal states) and the Christian Social Union (which runs in the state of Bavaria).

4. The 2018 voided race in North Carolina's 9th Congressional District was treated as if the seat did not exist.

It is important to understand that the findings are a hypothetical experiment, not a prediction of how an EU Parliament–style election in the United States would go. Voters, political parties, and candidates follow the rules set by the electoral system, leading American voters to cast an overwhelming portion of their votes for a major-party candidate. Were a proportional system ever adopted, one can confidently predict that the two-party system would not survive. Brazil uses an open-list-proportional-by-state method (with a different allocation formula) to elect its lower house (the Chamber of Deputies). As of the most recent election, members of 30 parties were elected.

Results

Using the real-world votes cast by party and the Election Calculator to make seat assignments, notional outcomes for the 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2018 House of Representatives elections under a proportional-by-state approach were calculated. These were then compared to the real-world, single-member district results (with certain uncontested races without reported vote totals excluded, as described in the methodology) to assess the extent to which each state might have district lines that "unduly favored" a political party.

Figure 1. Results of D'Hondt Allocation

Election Year	Real-World Majority Party	Real-World Majority Seats	Proportional by State Majority Party	Proportional by State Majority Seats	Change in Majority Party Size
2010	Republican	241	Republican	234	-7
2012	Republican	233	Republican	217	-16
2014	Republican	244	Republican	231	-13
2016	Republican	241	Republican	220	-21
2018	Democratic	235	Democratic	235	0

Seats Excluded for each year: 2010, one Republican-held seat with unreported results; 2012, one Republican-won and one Democratic-won seat with unreported results; 2014, three Republican seats and one Democratic seat with unreported results; 2016, one Democratic seat with unreported results; 2018, one seat given to no party because the election was voided

The results show that using the proportional-by-state allocation method would not have changed the majority party in any given election, though the Republican majorities elected in 2010 through 2016 would have been reduced in size in the alternate scenario. In all years, members of minor parties would have been elected:

Figure 2: Minor Parties

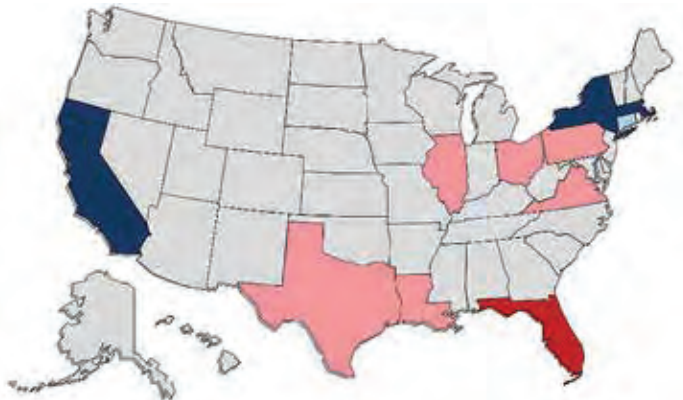| Year	Minor Party Qualifying for Proportional Seat	Seats	State
2010	Conservative	1	New York
2010	Libertarian	1	Texas
2010	No Party Affiliation	1	Florida
2012	No Party Affiliation	2	California, Florida
2012	Conservative	1	New York
2012	Working Families	1	New York
2012	Libertarian	1	Texas
2014	Conservative	2	New York
2014	Working Families	1	New York
2014	Libertarian	1	Texas
2016	Libertarian	2	Arkansas, Texas
2016	Conservative	1	New York
2018	Conservative	1	New York

Over the full period, eight states had aggregate net deviations from proportionality of ten seats or greater, with three favoring Democrats and five favoring Republicans.

Figure 3: States with Deviations from Proportional of Ten Seats or Greater

State	2010	2012	2014	2016	2018	Aggregate Deviation
Calif.	5	5	8	5	10	33
Conn.	2	2	2	2	2	10
Mass.	4	2	1	1	2	10
Florida	(4)	(3)	(1)	(2)	0	(10)
N.C.	1	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(11)
Penn.	(2)	(4)	(3)	(3)	(1)	(13)
Texas	(2)	(3)	(2)	(4)	(4)	(15)
Ohio	(3)	(4)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(16)

Note: Positive numbers are Democratic seats above proportion, negative numbers are Republican seats above proportion.

Figure 4: States with High Percentage of Deviation as a Proportion of Seats

Year	State	Seats Available	Deviation	Favored Party	Percentage Deviation
2010	Mass.	10	4	Democratic	40%
2012	Ohio	16	4	Republican	25%
2014	N.C.	13	3	Republican	23%
2016	N.C.	13	3	Republican	23%
2018	N.J.	12	4	Democratic	33%

Figure 5: 2010 States with Representational Deviation Greater Than Two Seats

Notation: New York's excess Democratic seats would be replaced by three Republicans and one member of the right-of-center Conservative Party of New York. Florida's excess Republican seats would be replaced by three Democrats and one No Party Affiliation. Texas's excess Republican seats would be replaced by one Democrat and one Libertarian.

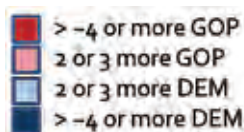**Figure 6: 2014 States with Representational Deviation Greater Than Two Seats**

Notation: New York's excess Democratic seats would be replaced by one Republican, two members of the right-of-center Conservative Party of New York, and one member of the left-wing Working Families Party. Texas's excess Republican seats would be replaced by one Democrat and one Libertarian.

Figure 7: 2018 States with Representational Deviation Greater Than Two Seats

Notation: New York's excess Democratic seats would be replaced by two Republicans and one member of the right-of-center Conservative Party of New York.

Key for all Maps:

- > −4 or more GOP
- 2 or 3 more GOP
- 2 or 3 more DEM
- > −4 or more DEM

California was the most deviant large state on aggregate in each election. The most deviant large state as a proportion of the seats available for each election are shown in Figure 4.

Analysis

Takeaway 1: Assessed nationwide, the effect of redistricting is overstated. Additionally, "edge cases" with apparently incongruous results occur in many validly democratic-republican electoral systems.

Looking at the national seat allocations, one fact stands out: Over the entire period, control of the House of Representatives would not have changed in the proportional-representation experimental condition from the party controlling the House in real life. (While the Republicans hold 217 seats in 2012's experimental condition, that is in a notional House of 433 members, because one GOP-won and one Democratic-won uncontested race in Florida without reported vote totals were excluded from consideration.)

The Republican majorities all shrink, which would be expected even if there were no intentional partisan-advantage gerrymandering. A dispersed rural and suburban party has a natural advantage in converting votes into seats relative to a concentrated, urban party in a single-member-district system. The median voting precinct in the 2016 presidential election was at least somewhat Republican, despite Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton receiving more raw votes; the effect of Democrats living in overwhelmingly rather than moderately Democratic areas effectively self-packs Democrats into "safe" districts. Additionally, the prevailing view of the Voting Rights Act requires that ethnic minorities receive "majority-minority districts." In practice, the creation of such districts may further inadvertently pack Democratic voters into fewer districts.

While Republicans received boosts of at least three seats relative to proportional allocations from Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas, North Carolina, and Florida (among 21 states that returned "too many" Republican representatives in 2012, when the districts were "freshest"), there were countervailing states that returned "too many" Democrats: California's Democratic delegation exceeded the proportional allocation by six seats (despite the district lines being drawn by an ostensibly cross-party panel), New York's by four (though one "lost" seat would go to the allied Working Families Party), and four other blue states returned two more Democrats than proportional representation would assign.

And the 2012 elections, in which the Republicans won a majority without receiving the most votes, would remain an "inverted" result with a Republican majority. While left-progressives rage at this apparent "anti-democratic" outcome, numerous democratic electoral systems have yielded similar incongruous results in real-world elections, not just America's first-past-the-post system. In 1998, Australia's center-right Liberal-National Coalition won reelection under a full-preferential compulsory voting single-member district system despite receiving 200,000 fewer "two-party preferred" votes than the defeated Labor Party.

Proportional systems, especially those with thresholds for representation or state-by-state representation systems, can still yield incongruous results. In the 2013 German federal election, the country's 5 percent threshold to win seats eliminated the market-capitalist Free Democratic Party and the nationalist Alternative for Germany, forcing the center-right Christian Democratic Union to form a coalition with the center-left Social Democrats. In its 2018 legislative elections, Brazil returned more deputies from the left-wing Workers Party than from the right-wing Social Liberal Party (PSL) despite the PSL receiving 1.3 million more votes. (This is likely due to malapportionment to reduce the power of Sao Paulo state, which voted a plurality for the PSL.)

Takeaway 2: Redistricting "matters," but it manifests principally in the short run and can be obviated by population movements and political dynamics in the long run.

The results showing the smallest deviations from proportionality on aggregate in 2010 (the final general election of the post-2000 Census redistricting cycle) and in 2018 (the fourth of five in the post-2010 cycle) should not surprise. While in both cases (especially the post-2010 cycle) proportionality has been assisted by redrawing maps after partisan litigation, a principal contributor to increased national proportionality is shifting political allegiances over time.

> " *Dummymander"—a districting map drawn to advantage one party that over the course of a census cycle ends up favoring the other.*

Such shifts in allegiances can turn a partisan-advantaging "gerrymander" into a self-sabotaging "dummymander"—a districting map drawn to advantage one party that over the course of a census cycle ends up favoring the other.

Over the 2012–2018 period, two states stand out as potential "dummymanders": Virginia and New Jersey. Both states had maps drawn by Republican-aligned panels, though Virginia's was modified before the 2016 elections as a result of Voting Rights Act–related litigation, making it slightly less favorable to Republicans.

After the 2012 elections, both states' maps awarded the Republicans more seats than the proportional vote would have. By the 2018 elections, both states' partisan favoritism had flipped: Virginia returned one more Democrat than it "should" have, and New Jersey returned a full third of its delegation as "excess" Democrats.

Figure 8: Possible Republican "Dummymanders"

State	2012	2014	2016	2018
N.J.	(1)	0	0	4
Virginia	(2)	(2)	(2)	1

Note: Positive numbers are Democratic seats above proportional representation, negative numbers are Republican seats above proportional representation.

The reasons for these shifts are easily understandable. Between 2014 and 2018 the Republican Party fundamentally reconsidered who its base voters were; instead of the party's historical reliance on upper-middle-class suburbanites, Republican officeholders shifted their allegiance to (white) rural laboring classes. The result was defeat for Republican lawmakers such as Barbara Comstock (R-VA), Tom MacArthur (R-NJ), Leonard Lance (R-NJ), and David Brat (R-VA) in the 2018 elections. The New Jersey Republicans were especially hard hit, as provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 that limit deductions for state and local taxes paid were exceptionally hard on upper-middle-class taxpayers in very high-tax states such as New Jersey.

These sorts of swings illustrate the peril of drawing districts to maximize the number of members of a party elected to Congress: If the political dynamics underlying the district boundaries change, a number of "protected" incumbents could lose their seats all at once.

> *It is important to understand that the findings are a hypothetical experiment, not a prediction of how an EU Parliament–style election in the United States would go.*

Takeaway 3: Neither major political party is innocent of creating congressional maps designed to advantage their representation.

Much of the conversation about redistricting is driven by groups such as the openly partisan National Democratic Redistricting Committee and ostensibly nonpartisan but ideologically liberal groups such as FairVote, Common Cause, and the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation. And the discussion tends to focus on Republican efforts to shore up their positions through "gerrymandering" as in North Carolina and Ohio. Yet Democratic-led legislatures likewise violate proportionality to shore up their positions.

While California—the most-divergent Democratic state on aggregate—draws district lines using a "citizens' redistricting commission" (which will be addressed in Takeaway Four), Connecticut and Massachusetts use legislative redistricting and draw districts that ruled out representation for those states' minority Republicans through the entire decade—regardless of shifting political winds.

A proportional allocation of Connecticut's five seats would have returned three Democrats and two Republicans in each election. Instead, in each election it returned a unanimous five Democrats. Massachusetts' effectiveness in suppressing the election of a Republican in any of its nine districts (Massachusetts lost a seat in the 2010 Census) led the party of the state's sitting governor (Republican Charlie Baker) not to contest half (18 of the 36) of the congressional district elections from 2012 through 2018.

While these results are notable, the divergence from proportionality does not necessarily indicate "partisan gerrymandering." Democratic voters in Connecticut and Massachusetts may simply be exceptionally efficiently distributed. Another, clearer illustration of the Democratic Party's willingness to gerrymander comes from North Carolina, better known for its post-2010 Republican-drawn district lines of recent controversy. Prior to 2010, the Republican Party had not controlled both houses of the North Carolina General Assembly since the nineteenth century, and the General Assembly's control of redistricting is not subject to the governor's veto.

Unsurprisingly, in the 2010 U.S. House elections, the Republican Party received one fewer seat than the Democratic Party in North Carolina, despite the GOP

> *Despite several voting law "reforms" designed to juice turnout and votes cast for Democratic candidates, Democrats won "only" 65.7 (8.01 million of 12.1 million) percent of the votes.*

receiving 240,000 more votes. Only after losing control of the General Assembly and redistricting did the Democrats and liberals in the state demand the adoption of the (Republican-proposed) independent redistricting commission. Republicans instead decided to repay Democrats for their century of gerrymandering by advancing a legislative-drawn map that advantaged the GOP.

Figure 9: Disproportion in Texas and California

Election Year	California		Texas	
	Seats	Percentage	Seats	Percentage
2012	5	9.4%	-3	-8.3%
2014	8	15.1%	-2	-5.6%
2016	5	9.4%	-4	-11.1%
2018	10	18.9%	-4	-11.1%
Average	7	13.2%	-3.25	-9.0%

Note: Negative values indicate more Republicans were returned in real life than would be proportional; positive values show more Democrats than proportional.

Takeaway 4: Commission-drawn maps can result in a de facto gerrymander.

Everyone knows that the Golden State is Democratic. But it is not 86.8 percent Democratic, as its post-2018 congressional delegation (46 Democrats, 7 Republicans) is. Indeed, despite several voting law "reforms" designed to juice turnout and votes cast for Democratic candidates, Democrats won "only" 65.7 percent (8.01 million of 12.1 million) of the votes. Analyzed using the proportional-by-state method, California returns an "excess" of ten Democratic members.

This deviation from proportionality occurs despite California drawing its district lines using the supposedly "fairer" method of the Citizens Redistricting Commission. Indeed, the Democrats' H.R. 1 would grandfather California's commission while creating similar commissions in the states that do not currently employ one. Meanwhile, Texas uses conventional partisan redistricting (which after 2010 was controlled

by Republicans). Despite this, Texas's state-level results for the elections conducted after the 2010 redistricting (when California's Citizens Redistricting Commission came into force for congressional districts) deviated from proportionality by less than California's "bipartisan" map did—both in aggregate seats and in percentage of seats.

Conclusion

The results of this experiment show a few things. First, the impact of congressional redistricting is usually slight and fleeting. The Republicans' post-2010 advantage evaporated by the conclusion of the 2018 elections, which returned a Congress that has a partisan composition very much like the one that D'Hondt's method applied at the state level would. (D'Hondt's method would probably be more ideologically diverse, with more Southern Democrats and New England and California Republicans, but that is a discussion for another time.)

Second, it shows that both parties in a state-level majority (as one prefers) prosper from the natural dispersion of the other party's voters or engage in partisan gerrymandering. For every Ohio there is a Connecticut or a Maryland.

Third, it shows that the Democrats' proposed solution to the "problem" of legislative redistricting, the so-called "independent redistricting commission," fails to ensure a "fairer" allocation of seats, leading one to wonder what the real motivation behind such a proposal might be.

All told, it is important to note that the question of who shall determine the allocation of representatives in the legislature is a fundamentally political question that cannot be resolved without political considerations. There is no non-political way to apportion a legislative body. Indeed, that act may be the most political act a polity can undertake. This is therefore good cause to leave the question of representation to the political branches—to legislation, not to faux-scientific legal baby-splitting. ■