



FORCED ELECTRIFICATION: THE NEXT STAGE IN ENVIRONMENTALISTS' WAR ON CONSUMERS

PAGE 13

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

3 Woke Children's Books:
Indoctrinating the Next
Generation of Radicals

5 The Money and
Groups Pushing
Ranked-Choice Voting

21 Organizing Against
America: Big Government's
Workers Take Over
Big Labor

31 Nonprofits and Politics
in *The Argument*:
The Origins of a Trend

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CONTENTS



COMMENTARY

Woke Children's Books: Indoctrinating the Next Generation of Radicals

By Scott Walter

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5 ORGANIZATION TRENDS

The Money and Groups
Pushing Ranked-Choice Voting

By Fred Lucas



13 GREEN WATCH

Forced Electrification:
The Next Stage in Environmentalists'
War on Consumers

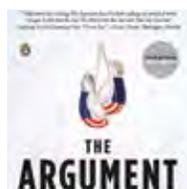
By Hayden Ludwig



21 LABOR WATCH

Organizing Against America:
Big Government's Workers
Take Over Big Labor

By Ken Braun



31 ORGANIZATION TRENDS

Nonprofits and Politics
in *The Argument*:
The Origins of a Trend

By Robert Stilson

ARCHITECTS OF WOKE:

The 1619 Project's Fake History



STOKELY CARMICHAEL



& RACISM WITHOUT RACISTS

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK & THE ROMANCE OF REVOLUTIONARY TERROR



CRC's Architects of Woke series takes aim at far-left post-modernist and Marxist thinkers and activists responsible for the spread of identity politics on college campuses and in society at large.

The series is hosted and directed by award-winning filmmaker Rob Montz, whose online documentary work has attracted millions of views and coverage in major outlets, including *The Economist*, *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and The Adam Carolla Podcast.

Subjects of the Architects of Woke include the fake history of the 1619 Project, the wildly popular radical socialist podcast *Chapo Trap House*, far-left political activist Howard Zinn, University of California at Berkeley feminist gender theorist Judith Butler, highly influential Marxist-Leninist philosopher Slavoj Žižek.

Watch the entire series at [DangerousDocumentaries.com](https://www.DangerousDocumentaries.com).

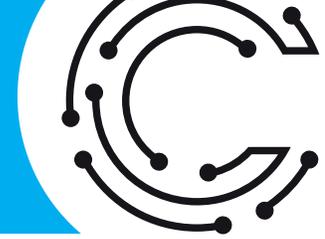


Howard Zinn, Hollywood, & the Fairy Tale of American Evil



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AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

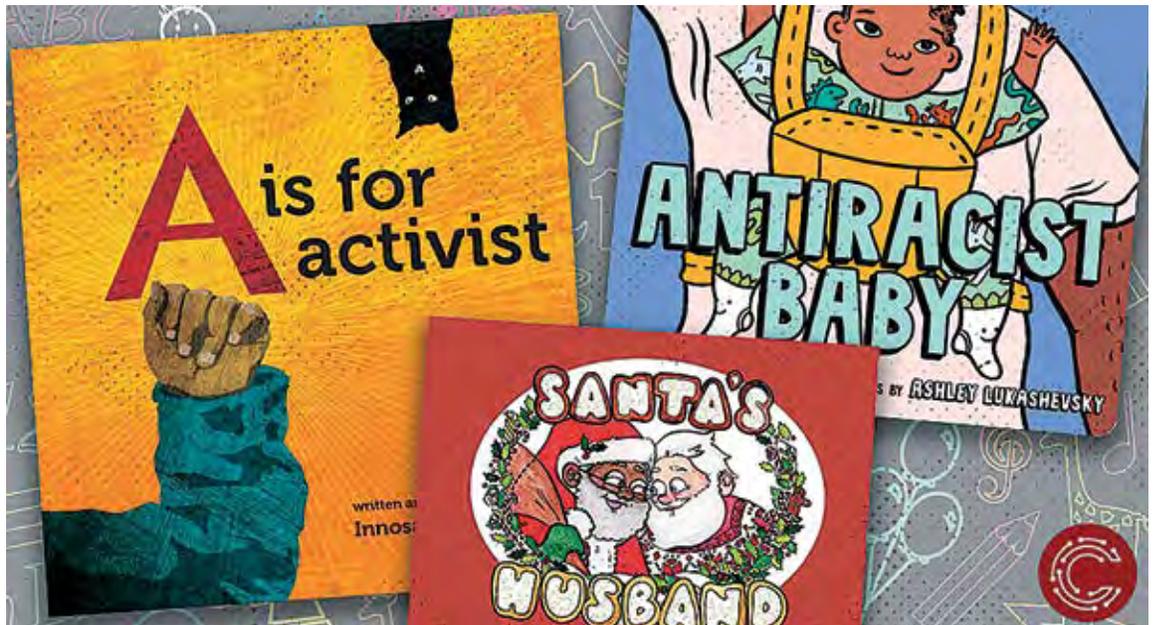
DANGEROUS
DOCUMENTARIES



WOKE CHILDREN'S BOOKS: INDOCTRINATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF RADICALS

By Scott Walter

In the ongoing ideological battle between culture warriors on the Left and free marketers on the Right, the Left continues to push the envelope with its aggressive messaging tactics. It's not enough that they control Hollywood, the mainstream news media, most university campuses, and even most Fortune 500 companies: They've now inundated the children's literature space with the worst of their ideas and propaganda.



Credit: CRC.

While the progressive children's books of the 1970s sought to promote tolerance of different viewpoints, races, religions, and orientations, today's offerings from the Left are about completely rewriting the culture.

The Great Book Masquerade

In late September, many parents in Fairfax County, Virginia, were shocked to learn that books with passages describing sexual acts could be found in local school libraries. One book, *Lawn Boy*, even featured a depiction of pedophilia. While Fairfax County Public Schools responded by temporarily suspending the book from the library pending review by a committee of staff, students, and parents, this is simply the latest example of radical left-progressive missives masquerading as children's books.

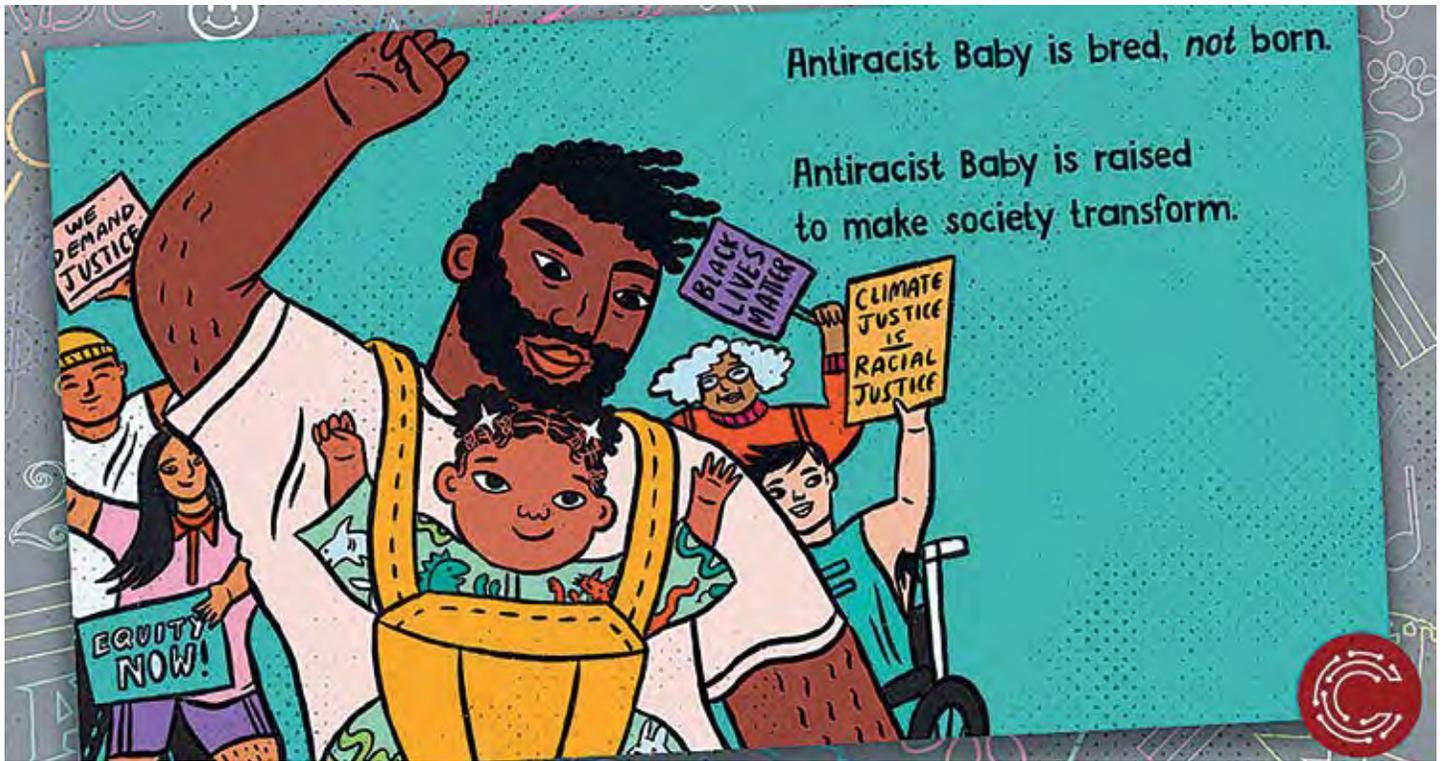


Many parents in Fairfax County, Virginia, were shocked to learn that books with passages describing sexual acts could be found in local school libraries.

Those who grew up in the 1970s will remember Marlo Thomas's album and book, *Free to Be You and Me* and its message of gender equality, tolerance, and recognition that "it's all right to cry." (Who isn't a fan of Rosey Greier?) While the creative left-wing messages in *Free to Be You and Me*, Dr. Suess's *The Butter Battle*, and others during that period taught acceptance and optimism, today's Leftist children's books are transparently anti-free-market propaganda that seeks to divide people and even rewrite the most basic cultural traditions.

Innosanto Nagara's *A is for Activist* is an alphabet book aimed at children ages 1 to 3 that seeks to mold the next generation of socialist revolutionaries. Besides A being for activist, Nagara thinks C stands for "Co-op. Cooperating Cultures. Creative Counter to Corporate vultures," and S is for "Sun, Sol, Solar" and not for "Silly Selfish Scoundrels Sucking on

Scott Walter is president of Capital Research Center.



Credit: *Antiracist Baby*, Ibram X. Kendi. License: Fair use.

dinosaur Sludge,” and U is for “Union. Union Yes!” The book touches on most of the key buzzwords of the left-progressive stump speech: diversity, democracy, feminism, LGBTQ pride, gender-neutral pronouns, and labor rights.

“Antiracist” Toddlers

Race is another regular topic in the Left’s attempt to brainwash the pre-K crowd. Author Ibram X. Kendi is the director of the Center for Antiracist Research at Boston University where he works to indoctrinate college kids, but he also published a children’s book in 2020 named *Antiracist Baby*. In it, he declares in the beginning that babies are “taught to be racist or antiracist—there’s no neutrality.” Throughout the book, Kendi suggests that readers focus on race, talk about race, and even make sure they “confess the racist ideas that we sometimes express”—a dubious suggestion for anyone living under the tyranny of cancel culture.

It’s unclear how this intense and ever-present focus on race will eventually deliver a world where he claims, “we shall overcome racism.”

While the progressive children’s books of the 1970s sought to promote tolerance of different viewpoints, races, religions, and orientations, today’s offerings from the Left are about completely rewriting the culture. *Santa’s Husband* by Daniel Kibblesmith is a prime example. In his Christmas

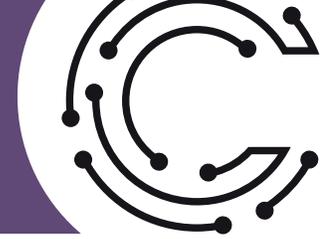
story, Santa is gay with a husband named David, the North Pole is getting warmer because of global warming, Rudolf has dietary restrictions, and the elves are happily unionized. With woke references on almost every page, the author’s agenda is clearly the star of this story—with any kind of Christmas spirit taking a minor role.

Riding the Woke Wave

There is a little bit of good news. While the new generation of Leftist children’s book authors is decidedly anti-free-market, many seem intent on cashing in on the current woke wave. A number of recent children’s books from the radical Left seem decidedly aimed at selling more books to left-progressive parents, not educating or entertaining the children they profess to serve. Any parent of young kids knows that a two-year-old will not understand the vocabulary and concepts presented in a book like *Antiracist Baby*.

The Left’s culture war has many fronts, and the children of America are firmly in the crosshairs. With teacher unions controlling the school curriculum, most parents won’t know when this propaganda reaches school libraries or the classroom. ■

Read previous articles from the Commentary series online at <https://capitalresearch.org/category/commentary/>.



THE MONEY AND GROUPS PUSHING RANKED-CHOICE VOTING

By Fred Lucas

Summary: *At least 22 jurisdictions—New York City, San Francisco, Maine, and Alaska—used ranked-choice voting (RCV) in their most recent elections. That number is expected to more than double in the next round of elections. Efforts to push RCV are almost exclusively funded by the usual left-wing suspects, arguing that it is more democratic. Yet despite its clearly left-wing odor, some Republicans have shown interest in RCV. Even Utah now allows local jurisdictions to use RCV. Opponents argue that RCV is needlessly confusing to voters and can depress voter turnout among minorities. With left-wing donors pumping millions of dollars into the campaign, RCV will continue to be an issue for the foreseeable future.*

In New York City's Democratic mayoral primary in June, Eric Adams won a 10-point lead over his nearest competitors, making the former police officer potentially the second black mayor of the nation's largest city.

Except that commanding lead all but evaporated to a narrow 2-point lead in the next round of counting thanks to the city's new ranked-choice voting (RCV) system.

New York City adopted rank choice voting—a system where voters rank the candidates from most to least preferred—for primary elections. If no candidate wins 50 percent, then the vote counting goes into another round, and second choices are considered. The theory of the method—sometimes called an instant runoff—is that no one wins a multi-candidate contest without less than 50 percent of the vote.

This reform came after a 2019 ballot initiative bankrolled largely by \$500,000 from Unite America, financed by Kathryn Murdoch, and by \$1 million from the Action Now Initiative, a liberal group founded and funded by liberal donors John and Laura Arnold. Jonathan Soros, son of left-wing billionaire George Soros, also dropped \$100,000 of his fortune into changing New York City's primary election. Big donors to the efforts to push ranked-choice voting elsewhere have included Level the Playing Field, a group led and financially backed by activist and hedge fund manager Peter Ackerman.



Credit: Koyatub97. License: <https://iiti.ly/3E3kPSL>

In New York City's Democratic mayoral primary in June, Eric Adams won a 10-point lead over his nearest competitors, making the former police officer potentially the second black mayor of the nation's largest city.

Unite America, with the help of \$3.8 million from the daughter-in-law of media mogul Rupert Murdoch, has been the largest funder of drives to promote this form of elections in states and localities across the country. The top organizations advocating for the change in states and local jurisdictions have been the Committee for Ranked Choice Voting, FairVote, and other mostly left-leaning election reform groups.

The states of Maine and Alaska have ranked-choice voting statewide, while about 50 cities and counties have adopted

Fred Lucas is chief national affairs correspondent for the Daily Signal and the author of Abuse of Power: Inside the Three-Year Campaign to Impeach Donald Trump.



Under ranked-choice voting, the city of San Francisco has seen a depressed voter turnout in communities of color.”

—Daneek Miller

the system, according to FairVote, a left-leaning election reform nonprofit that advocates for adopting the system. San Francisco was the first major city to adopt it, and New York City is the most populous jurisdiction to adopt RCV.

While it varies by jurisdiction, in New York City voters can rank their top five choices. But not everyone left of center is on board with the idea. Well before the 2021 mayoral primary election occurred, minority leaders in New York said the new system might work against minority candidates, as it almost did. Hazel Dukes, president of the NAACP’s New

York State Conference said RCV “is not for us,” according to the *Manhattan Times*.

The borough newspaper reported that New York City Council Member Daneek Miller, co-chairman of the council’s Black, Latino & Asian Caucus, argued: “Under ranked-choice voting, the city of San Francisco has seen a depressed voter turnout in communities of color.”

Meanwhile, the newspaper reported the caucus co-chairwoman Adrienne Adams, said, “Now that our black and brown communities have found electoral success, the powerful special interests want to change the rules on us.”

As it turned out, Adams emerged as the Democratic nominee for mayor, but it was a far from certain outcome despite being the first choice of a hefty plurality of the city’s Democratic voters.

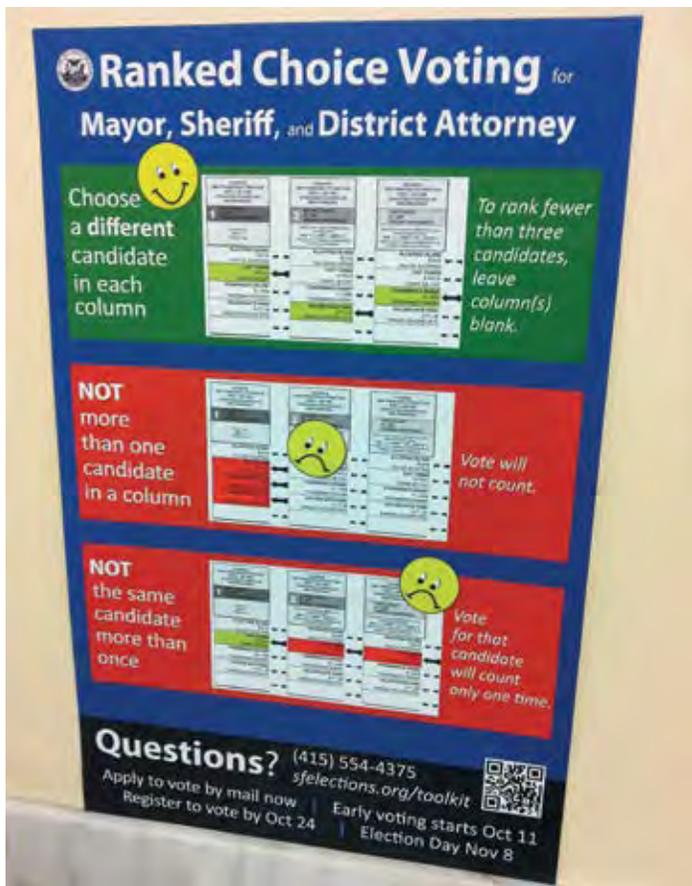
Proponents—such as FairVote and Unite America—say this form of voting means voters would no longer have to settle for a lesser of two evils and would lead to less polarized politics.

Opponents assert that this could be confusing to voters and, perhaps more importantly, can mean the candidate with the most first-place votes doesn’t win the election.

How RCV Works

Ranked-choice voting varies by jurisdiction, but generally works like this in either a crowded primary election field or a multiparty general election:

- All candidates for a given office appear on the ballot. Instead of choosing only one candidate, voters rank each candidate from “1” to “2” to “3” and so on based on their preference.
- If one candidate wins 50 percent or more of the first-preference votes, the election is over.
- However, if no candidate wins 50 percent or more in the first tally, the candidate with the fewest first-preference votes is eliminated and officials make another tally of votes for the remaining candidates.



Credit: Steve Rhodes. License: <https://bit.ly/3DY74EH>.

“Not only is ranked-choice voting too complicated, but it also disenfranchises voters, because ballots that do not include the two ultimate finalists are cast aside to manufacture a faux majority for the winner.”— Hans von Spakovsky

- Voters who selected the eliminated candidate as their first choice have their vote counted for their second preference in this next round of tabulating.
- The counting continues, with one or more other candidates eliminated, until one candidate eventually emerges with a majority of votes.

Advocates insist it's a nonpartisan push. While the bulk of support comes from the Left, California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a notable Democrat, vetoed a bill to make the nation's most populous state an RCV state. Newsom is a former mayor of San Francisco, the first major municipality to adopt the measure. He called RCV confusing to voters in his 2019 veto message: "Where it has been implemented, I am concerned that it has often led to voter confusion, and that the promise that ranked-choice voting leads to greater democracy is not necessarily fulfilled."

To contest the confusing claim, the pro-RCV FairVote has cited a *Bangor Daily News* survey after the 2018 election that said 75 percent of respondents said they understood the ranked-choice voting system in Maine.

Still, a bigger complication is disenfranchising voters, according to a study by election law experts Hans von Spakovsky and J. Christian Adams, both former Justice Department lawyers.

"Not only is ranked-choice voting too complicated, but it also disenfranchises voters, because ballots that do not include the two ultimate finalists are cast aside to manufacture a faux majority for the winner," wrote von Spakovsky, a senior legal fellow at the Heritage Foundation and Adams, president of the Public Interest Legal Foundation. "But it is only a majority of the voters remaining in the final round, not a majority of all of the voters who actually cast votes in the elections."

Winning by Losing

This near miss in New York City's first experience with ranked-choice voting is far from the first controversy involving the system that has been pushed financially by the Left and in some cases is being embraced by some on the right.

In 2018, Rep. Bruce Poliquin (R-ME) won the plurality as the first choice of voters. But failing to win 50 percent, he ultimately lost his race for reelection to Democrat Jared Golden after subsequent rounds of counting.

Thus far, 17 percent of candidates who won a plurality as the first choice of voters ended up losing the election,

according to a 2019 study by the Maine Policy Institute that looked at 96 ranked-choice elections nationally.

The Maine Policy Institute is a conservative think tank that opposed adopting RCV in the state.

Of note, in the 2010 Oakland mayor's race, the candidate with the most first-place votes lost the election to a candidate who had 25,000 fewer votes after nine rounds of counting. The first-choice winner for a mayor's race in Burlington, Vermont, lost the election in 2008. Before that, it was 1975 in the Ann Arbor, Michigan mayor's race that the top vote-getter didn't win the election.

Four jurisdictions that had adopted RCV—Burlington, Vermont; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Aspen, Colorado; and Pierce County, Washington—repealed laws allowing ranked-choice voting. Burlington, Aspen, and Pierce County acted after a plurality winner lost an election.

North Carolina scrapped its ranked-choice voting for judicial vacancies that it adopted in 2006. State lawmakers repealed the reform in 2013 because of two judicial elections in 2010 where a statewide Court of Appeals race and a districtwide Superior Court race—resulted in several rounds of counting.

The Maine Policy Institute study also included examples from two city council races in Minneapolis in 2017; a 2016 city council race in Berkeley, California; and a 2016 school director race in Oakland, California.

"The frequency with which ranked-choice voting elections produce a different outcome than plurality elections is important because it allows lawmakers to weigh the benefits and consequences of a new voting system," the study by the Maine Policy Institute says. "If ranked-choice elections rarely produce a different outcome, the costs of such a system may outweigh the alleged benefits."

A 2014 review by professors from the University of North Carolina and Ohio State University looked at four elections in Washington State and California that used ranked-choice



In the 2010 Oakland mayor's race, the candidate with the most first-place votes lost the election to a candidate who had 25,000 fewer votes after nine rounds of counting.



Credit: Stanford PACS. License: <https://bit.ly/3j4cS49>.

The Action Now Initiative based in Houston, Texas, was established by John Arnold (not shown), a hedge fund billionaire, and his wife Laura Arnold. John Arnold is a former executive for the scandal-plagued and bankrupt energy firm Enron.

voting and found, “the winner in all four elections receive less than a majority of the total votes cast.”

“Thus, it is possible that the winning candidate will fall short of an actual majority when a substantial number of ballots are eliminated, or ‘exhausted,’ during the vote redistribution process,” the report said, adding that “there is some probability that a voter’s ballot will become exhausted, eliminating their influence over the final outcome.”

Bankrollers of RCV

The Action Now Initiative based in Houston, Texas, was established by John Arnold, a hedge fund billionaire, and his wife Laura Arnold. Arnold is a former executive for the scandal-plagued and bankrupt energy firm Enron.

The Arnolds established the Action Now Initiative in 2012 as a grantmaking group for center-left policies. The Action Now Initiative is associated with the Laura and John Arnold Foundation and the for-profit Arnold Ventures.

Kathryn Murdoch has been the largest donor to the Denver, Colorado-based Unite America to convince Alaska voters to say yes to ranked-choice voting in November. She is also the largest donor to Unite America, donating \$3.8 million of \$5.1 million that the political action committee (PAC) received in 2019. Kathryn Murdoch and her husband James

Murdoch, son of Rupert Murdoch, are co-founders of the liberal Quadrivium Foundation.

“A strong democracy is the foundation for progress on every issue that we care about,” Murdoch said in a March 2020 statement about funding Unite America. “Therefore we must take urgent action to address our increasingly polarized and gridlocked system that is at present incapable of putting the needs and aspirations of citizens and their communities first.”

Unite America casts itself as a centrist and nonpartisan organization. But Murdoch worked for the Clinton Foundation from 2007 to 2011 conducting strategy and communications work for the Clinton Climate Initiative.

Between 2016 and 2019, she donated to Hillary Clinton’s 2016 presidential campaign, the Democratic National Committee, and multiple Democratic Party congressional candidates. She contributed to Pete Buttigieg’s campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2019, but she said in 2020 that she was “really excited to back whoever the [Democratic presidential] nominee is, no matter what.”

Serving with Murdoch as co-chair of the board at Unite America is Shawn Riegsecker, the founder and CEO of an advertising company. He donated to President Barack Obama’s 2008 and 2012 campaigns and the Democratic National Committee Services Organization.

Other big donors to Unite America include video game developer Riot Games co-founder Marc Merrill and Panera Bread founder Ron Shaich, both board members. Both have also been Democratic donors. Another board member is Greg Orman, a one-time perennial candidate who has run for governor and senator in Kansas both as an independent and as a Democrat.

Nick Troiano, who previously unsuccessfully ran for Congress in Pennsylvania as an independent, is the executive director of the Unite America and the executive director of Unite America Institute. In 2019, Troiano donated to the Buttigieg campaign.

CC —————
In 2020, Kathryn Murdoch said she was “really excited to back whoever the [Democratic presidential] nominee is, no matter what.”

Unite America is a “hybrid political action committee,” which means it operates as both a super PAC that is allowed to make unlimited, independent expenditures to help candidate campaigns and as a traditional PAC that makes direct contributions to candidate campaigns. Unite America professes to back centrist and independent candidates from both parties. However, it has generally backed moderate Democrats.

In addition to ranked-choice voting, Unite American also backs congressional redistricting through independent commissions, requiring open primary elections, and expanding vote by mail.

Unite America has funded Alaskans for Better Elections, which ran that states ranked-choice voting movement; Pennsylvanians Against Gerrymandering, which supports independently drawn districts; and Ranked Choice Voting 2020, the group that handled the failed effort in Massachusetts.

Losing Illinois Democratic congressional candidate Charles Wheelan, an economics professor, established the Centrist Project in 2013 with the stated goal of electing moderates.

The group changed its name to Unite America PAC in 2018 and backed independent candidates for state legislative races in Colorado, Washington, Maine, Oregon, Arizona, New Mexico, and Alaska. In Colorado, the secretary of state's office determined Unite America had violated state campaign finance laws—even though none of its candidates won.

Thus, it shifted its strategy to supporting ballot initiatives.

Catching On

At the statewide level, advocates for the changes went 1-1 in the 2020 election, as a red state's voters approved the changes and a blue state electorate said no.

Alaska voters narrowly approved R with 51 percent and will put it to the test in 2022. In Massachusetts, 55 percent of voters rejected becoming an RCV state.

For the 2020 ballot, Kathryn Murdoch spent \$500,000 through the Unite America PAC and gave another \$500,000 to the RCV campaign in Massachusetts.

While the RCV advocates cast the matter as nonpartisan, it took on a very partisan flavor in Massachusetts when Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) endorsed the measure but Republican Gov. Charlie Baker opposed it.



Credit: BillMoyers.com. License: <https://bit.ly/3G2Crji>.

Jonathan Soros, CEO of JS Capital Management, also reportedly gave \$100,000 to the effort to bring ranked-choice voting to Massachusetts.

Proponents had money on their side. Many wealthy people from outside of Massachusetts opened their wallets to push the Bay State into the RCV column.

Action Now Initiative gave almost \$3 million to bring ranked-choice voting to Massachusetts. Erin Mindich, a former hedge fund manager and Goldman Sachs executive, donated \$240,000 in Massachusetts. Gehl Foods CEO Katherine Gehl gave \$250,000, the *Boston Herald* reported. Inside Massachusetts, Boston Celtics owner and Bain Capital executive Stephen Pagliuca donated \$100,000. Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter gave \$250,000 to the failed effort. Jonathan Soros, CEO of JS Capital Management, also reportedly gave \$100,000 to the effort to bring RCV to Massachusetts.

Maine, traditionally a blue state, first adopted ranked choice in the 2016 election. The measure passed 52-48 among voters.

Maine became the first state with help from the organization from the PAC, the Committee for Ranked Choice Voting, which got about 80 percent of its more than \$1 million in funding from two sources, the Arnold-financed Action Now Initiative, and Level the Playing Field, a group led by activist Peter Ackerman, according to the Bangor Daily News.

Maine voters in fact approved the election reform twice.

The Maine Legislature had suspended the implementation of the ranked-choice voting system on technical grounds, at

one point making it appear unlikely it would be part of the 2018 voting.

However, some of the same advocates had additional help on Question 1 on the ballot, which was to repeal the legislature's act—thus allowing RCV to go into effect for the 2018 election.

Action Now Initiative contributed \$188,500 and Level the Playing Field gave \$213,000 to reverse the legislature's act.

Another group that came into the mix was Represent.US, an organization founded in 2012 that has traditionally backed restrictions on money in politics. The nonprofit has notably worked with Hollywood celebrities such as Jennifer Lawrence and has received money from left-funding giants such as the Atlantic Foundation, Tides Foundation, and Park Foundation. In June 2018, Represent.US spent \$52,256 on Question 1 in Maine.

During 2021 some 30 bills were introduced in state legislatures across the country to make their states RCV states. But the idea has particularly caught on at a local level, largely due to some of the big donors that have been driving the move.

The state legislatures of Virginia and Utah adopted the system as a local option, but not for statewide elections. That said, the Virginia Republican Party used ranked-choice voting for its state convention in 2021 to nominate candidates for statewide office.

“As of September 2021, 22 jurisdictions used RCV in their most recent elections, 20 more will use RCV for the first time in November 2021, and at least 50 jurisdictions are projected to use RCV in either their next election or the one following,” FairVote says in a post. “That represents 2 states, 1 county, and 27 cities outside of Utah, with 23 Utah city councils voting to use RCV and 19 doing so in either 2019 or 2021.”

New York City adoption in 2019 was a massive victory for the movement and came with significant financial backing. Certainly, in terms of a media market, the New York mayor gets more attention than many governors.

The Committee for Ranked Choice Voting NYC raised \$2 million for the campaign to push the Big Apple's reform for primary elections. This primarily came from \$1 million from the Action Now Initiative, \$500,000 from James and Kathryn Murdoch, and \$100,000 from Jonathon Soros, the Associated Press reported.

In the 2020 election, voters in six municipalities adopted or expanded ranked-choice voting: Albany, California; Eureka, California; Bloomington, Minnesota; Minnetonka, Minnesota; Boulder, Colorado; and Portland, Maine.

Previously, major cities such as Santa Fe, New Mexico; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota; and Oakland, San Francisco, California adopted ranked-choice voting.

The red states of Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina—which all have runoffs if a candidate doesn't win a majority—allow for overseas ranked-choice voting in case an election goes to a runoff.

The 2020 Democratic presidential nominating contests in Alaska, Nevada, Hawaii, Kansas, and Wyoming used the ranked-choice voting method, though this did not affect the general election for those states.

RCV is by no means unique to the United States, as FairVote notes every voter uses the system in Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, Malta, Northern Ireland, and Scotland. Meanwhile, RCV—or instant runoffs—are used by some means in India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Notably, the United States isn't the only country to also have a somewhat undemocratic outcome. For example, in the 2010 Australian elections, the Labor Party won the Australian House despite getting just 38 percent of the first-choice votes on the initial ballot. The Liberal-National coalition, which came in second place, got 43 percent of the first-choice votes. However, Labor won control of the House despite winning fewer first-choice votes.

Biggest Advocates

The Committee for Ranked Choice Voting, founded by former Maine elected officials and activists, is the political action committee that has pushed several key RCV initiatives since it was founded in 2014.

Former Maine State Sen. Dick Woodbury (I-Cumberland County) has been the chairman of the PAC since it was established in 2014. Cara Brown McCormick, a former aide to both Sen. Joe Biden (D-DE) and John Kerry (D-MA), serves as the treasurer of the group. McCormick is also the CEO of Level the Playing Field, a pro-independent candidate group and a leading funder of ranked-choice voting.

The Committee for Ranked Choice Voting expanded beyond Maine after the successful 2016 election.

The Kathryn Murdoch-financed Unite America gave \$145,000 to the Committee for Ranked Choice Voting in 2020. Jonathan Soros contributed \$125,000 to the group. Billionaire investor Nelson Peltz contributed \$50,000, and California donors Mary and John Palmer gave \$75,000 to



Credit: World Economic Forum. License: <https://bit.ly/3C23dpu>.

While FairVote is officially nonpartisan, major donors have generally come from the Left. These include the George Soros–sponsored Open Society Foundations, the Jennifer and Jonathan Allan Soros Foundation, and the Soros Fund Charitable Foundation.

the committee, according to a 2020 report by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The Chamberlain Project Foundation is the research arm of the Committee for Ranked Choice Voting. The foundation, established in 2017, gathers information and promotes public education on RCV—primarily in Maine. Peter Ackerman, a hedge fund manager, is the chairman of the Chamberlain Project Foundation.

Ackerman is also the key funder of Level the Playing Field, which gave more than \$500,000 to the Chamberlain Project Foundation. The Arnold-backed Action Now Initiative gave \$1 million to the foundation. New York real estate investor William Ackman gave \$100,000 to Chamberlain.

The leading activist group for ranked-choice voting nationally has been FairVote, a nonprofit based in Takoma Park, Maryland. Political activists, educators, and former government officials launched the group in 1992 in Cincinnati, Ohio, originally calling it Citizens for Proportional Representation. It changed its name to FairVote in 2004.

FairVote spent \$375,000 to back the ballot initiative in 2016 to make Maine the first state in the nation to adopt RCV.

While FairVote is officially nonpartisan, major donors have generally come from the Left. These include the George Soros–sponsored Open Society Foundations, the Jennifer

and Jonathan Allan Soros Foundation, and the Soros Fund Charitable Foundation.

Big donors to FairVote are also in the non-Soros realm, such as the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, run by the same family that has pushed RCV through the Action Now Initiative; William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, founded by the founder of Hewlett-Packard and his wife; and some of the largest grantmaking institutions to various left-wing causes: the Tides Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Two left-leaning organizations started by eBay founder and former chairman Pierre Omidyar—the Democracy Fund and the Omidyar Network Fund—have also given grants to FairVote.

Other major funders to FairVote are the liberal organizations Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Public Welfare Foundation, a group that focuses on criminal justice, juvenile penal changes, and labor union–backed employment policy.

FairVote is not a single-issue group. It also supports universal voter registration. With significant irony, the group wants a national popular vote in presidential races, arguing the Electoral College is undemocratic—ignoring that more top vote-getters in RCV elections have lost than the five times in American history the Electoral College didn't reflect the popular vote.

Former U.S. Rep. John Anderson (R-IL), who was an independent candidate for president in 1980, was FairVote's first executive director. Robert Richie is the current CEO of FairVote.

Building Momentum

The RCV effort is clearly gaining momentum with support and financing by many of the same leftist groups and individuals that complain about a lack of democracy.

While the most recent accounting found less than one-fifth of RCV races in the United States resulted in the first-place vote recipient losing the election, that number is bound to proliferate as more jurisdictions adopt the formula. The goal might be to bring less polarization, but the unforeseen circumstances could lead to even less trust in American elections. ■

Read previous articles from the Organization Trends series online at [CapitalResearch.org/category/organization-trends/](https://www.CapitalResearch.org/category/organization-trends/).

JULY 2021

**EDITED BY
HAYDEN LUDWIG**

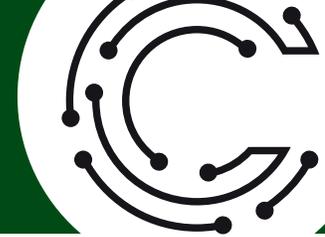


RISE OF THE ECO-RIGHT

A few dozen lobbying, litigation, and activist nonprofits that identify themselves as free market or broadly right-of-center are attempting to rebrand environmentalism and global warming ideology as conservative values. The Capital Research Center broke the news that these “eco-Right” groups also are secretly bankrolled by liberal mega-donors.



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FORCED ELECTRIFICATION: THE NEXT STAGE IN ENVIRONMENTALISTS' WAR ON CONSUMERS

By Hayden Ludwig

Summary: *Environmentalism boils down to making your life harder. From banning oil-burning cars to promising the moon with feel-good renewables, eco-activists are on a mission to make electricity a luxury good—and with it the prosperity Americans have enjoyed for generations. Their latest target is your home with a campaign to ban natural gas in houses and force all-electric appliances, promising to ratchet up power bills as the world goes into winter. How bad could it get? Ask frozen Germany—you won't like the answer.*

Home heating bills may rise as much as 54 percent this winter. Gas prices are at a seven-year high. This year crude oil shortages drove the price per barrel over \$80 for the first time since 2014, causing the U.S. to import the largest amount of Russian crude in a decade. This follows after President Joseph Biden cancelled expansion of the existing Keystone pipeline within hours of taking his oath of office.

The average American may drive 13,000 miles per year, but that didn't stop Senate Republicans and Democrats from hiking the federal gas tax by 191 percent to 53.3 cents and creating a pilot program for a per-mile 8-cent driving tax as part of the Biden infrastructure bill.

In California, "green" policies are shuttering the state's last nuclear power plant even as out-of-control wildfires force it to bypass power plant pollution restrictions just to keep the lights on. Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) and his fellow Democrats followed up by banning gasoline-powered lawnmowers and leaf blowers.

Canadians, as always, are one step ahead of the U.S. with a plan to phase out Ontario's natural gas plants in just nine



Credit: 10 10. License: <https://bit.ly/3B2dcm>.

The unexpected cold snap in February 2021—when temperatures hit 5°F—rendered tens of thousands of solar panels and turbines frozen stiff and useless, leaving Germans dependent on the country's remaining coal and nuclear plants running at full capacity to (barely) keep the lights on.

years in favor of renewables—a feel-good measure that seems set to cause rolling blackouts in the capital of the world's ninth-largest economy.

Across the pond, Canada's hara-kiri is only matched by the U.K. government's determination to see how much it can punish Brits with soaring electricity bills while bragging about making the kingdom "the Saudi Arabia of wind power."

Germany might finally live to see its island rival bludgeoned into obscurity... or not. It's looking like a dark winter for

Hayden Ludwig is a senior research analyst at CRC. CRC intern Joe O'Reilly contributed to this report.



Credit: DW News. License: <https://bit.ly/3moR8oA>.

Environmentalism as Therapy

It's hard to believe that the United States entered 2021 as an energy independent country and the world's third-largest energy exporter, thanks to aggressive deregulation and the fracking revolution that made natural gas cheap and abundant. That doesn't just mean inexpensive gasoline and lower household electricity bills, but better prices for food and essentials, affordable travel, fewer deaths from cold weather, and more foreign policy options for U.S. leaders when dealing with the hostile, volatile Middle East, Venezuela, Russia, and other oil-producing states.

No one wants to surrender these benefits. So environmental extremists sell their plans as virtually cost-free—if you like your standard of living, you can keep it *and* save the planet.

To hear the activists, building low-emission wind turbines and solar panels is chicken noodle soup for the carbon-troubled soul. Surely everyone can sleep better knowing we're doing our part to slow rising sea levels!

Regardless of one's stance on the causes and consequences of climate change, the reality is that people tend to support climate policies most when times are good and they feel generous. The environmental movement has shrewdly used decades of economic growth (broken only by the odd recession) to push the country and the Democratic Party further leftward: from supporting energy independence through oil in the 1980s to discarding oil in favor of natural gas in the 1990s and 2000s (enter Enron) to banning the fracking of natural gas in the 2010s to even abolishing natural gas altogether.

Why is that extreme?

Twenty years ago 51 percent of the nation's electricity was generated from coal. Today it's just 19 percent, while 40 percent comes from natural gas. When burned, gas emits just 75 percent of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) that oil does and half that of coal. This vast, market-driven switch from coal to gas has made the U.S. number one in CO₂ reductions, bar none. To most folks, that's a win for the consumer and the environment.

Professional climate warriors, however, have an agenda that uses CO₂ emissions to justify a radical transformation of the American economy and way of life. It's always been about making energy prohibitively expensive to the average person.

Chants like “keep it in the ground” aren't rational or grounded in science. They reveal a hatred of fossil fuels that won't cease until those resources are gone. That will come as no shock to anyone who understands the broader Left,

It's looking like a dark winter for the once energy-rich Germans, some of whom may freeze to death like their medieval energy-indigent ancestors in a crisis entirely of their own making.

the once energy-rich Germans, some of whom may freeze to death like their medieval energy-indigent ancestors in a crisis entirely of their own making. Across the rest of Europe, natural gas prices are spiking amid a supply crunch as countries vie to fill up depleted stockpiles. Things aren't looking good.

If you think it can't happen here, guess again.

Eco-activists are already lobbying for net-zero carbon bans on natural gas in the name of climate change, starting (as always) in California. In 2019, Berkeley banned natural gas hookups in new buildings. San Francisco and Oakland followed a year later. As of September 2021, at least 50 jurisdictions across the Golden State had banned gas or forced use of certain electric appliances in new constructions.

New York City's exiting mayor, Bill de Blasio, has announced a citywide ban on gas hookups for new buildings starting in 2030. Multiple Massachusetts municipalities and formerly Bernie Sanders-run Burlington, Vermont, are following suit, seeking to “rapidly decarbonize.”

Consumers will pay the steep price for this war on natural gas. It won't stop with California. This is America's gloomy future, as envisioned by the Left—and it starts in Americans' homes.



“Progressives” never truly compromise because every small victory moves them further on the long march toward socialism. Next stop: your home.

which spawned modern environmentalism. From Lenin to Mao to Alinsky, “progressives” never truly compromise because every small victory moves them further on the long march toward socialism. Next stop: your home.

The Stealth War on Your Dishwasher

Activists may call it “electrification,” but their plan has nothing to do with bringing electricity to rural communities à la the New Deal and Tennessee Valley Authority. Instead, it’s a way to force Americans to adopt all-electric products built according to regulations that often make them shoddier and less efficient.

It isn’t your imagination. Your dishwasher 10 years ago *really did* clean dishes better than the new appliance you bought last year thanks to energy efficiency regulations imposed by the Energy Department, which capped the amount of water and electricity that the appliance could use in a given cycle—down to 3–4 gallons from 9–10 gallons in older models.

Saving water is prudent, but there’s a price to pay. Not long ago a typical American dishwasher could cycle through a load of dishes in about an hour and a half. Today, that same load takes anywhere from two hours and 20 minutes to four hours to complete. Longer cleaning times and failing to actually clean mean more people will wash dishes by hand, which uses more water and energy than the appliance.

It’s gotten so bad that in 2019 the Trump administration ordered the Energy Department to create a new class of dishwashers that could complete a cycle in under an hour and allow higher water and energy usage as a feature. The proposed rule change was met with 2,700 comments, largely from frustrated consumers. “For the love of all that is holy, help us make dishwashers work right again,” one individual wrote.

“We freed it up,” Trump said on the 2020 campaign trail. “Now you can buy a dishwasher, and it comes out. It’s beautiful, go buy a dishwasher.” In August 2021, the Biden administration announced it was reversing the rule.

... and Furnace

Forced electrification laws could also mean mandating a switch from an oil- or gas-burning boilers and water heaters to electric appliances in homes, one of the most expensive parts of any retrofitting plan.

Across the West, Midwest, and Northeast the majority of houses are heated by natural gas, while many Northeastern homes also burn kerosine (from coal) or fuel oil (from petroleum). Electric heaters are only predominant in the warmer South, the legacy of a decades-long shift away from residential coal use.

Gas-fired heaters heat water faster. They also work when the power is out, which may be lifesaving during the kinds of winter storms that regularly hit the Midwest and Northeast. Natural gas provides resiliency against power outages and cold weather, when electric heaters can severely tax the power grid.

That exact scenario arose in February, when a historic cold front slammed Texas and triggered a sudden spike in electricity demand to warm homes. Sixty percent of Texas homes use electric heaters, making the state especially vulnerable to such situations.

Electric furnaces and water heaters are typically cheaper to install than their gas-fired counterparts but result in higher electricity bills. That can be a problem given that electricity rates have risen in recent years in many parts of the country.

The American Gas Association estimates that a typical gas-powered household saves \$874 per year on utilities compared with homes using all-electric appliances. In 2020, the average household paid \$63.34 per month for gas and \$114.44 per month for electricity.

The average U.S. residential electricity rate is 13.31 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh). In Wisconsin, it’s 14.28 cents/kWh; in Pennsylvania, 14.38 cents/kWh; in California, 19.9 cents/kWh (and rising); in Connecticut, 21.62 cents/kWh; and in Hawaii a whopping 32.76 cents/kWh.

Those prices are rapidly rising across Northeastern states, almost all of which belong to a regional cap-and-trade system (the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative) meant

to lower CO₂ emissions. Massachusetts, for example, saw a 13.73 percent increase in prices in 2020. That's *still* nowhere expensive enough for the Left—and it can get much, much worse.

What's Wrong with Natural Gas?

In Virginia, the most recent addition to this cap-and-trade system, the state's energy economy is the picture of success painted by moderate environmentalists 20 years ago. Almost 60 percent of its electricity is generated from natural gas and another 30 percent from just two nuclear power plants, which have operated safely for over four decades, carbon-free.

Imagine trying to power the state on wind turbines and solar panels, which together account for less than 7.3 percent of the Old Dominion's electricity production.

If that sounds crazy, it should. Yet that's exactly what the environmental Left proposes for the entire country. If activists want to eradicate *all* natural gas—like it aims to abolish oil, coal, nuclear plants, and dams—what does that mean for household electricity bills?

Renewable energy mandates from Virginia's Democratic-controlled legislature have already helped to spike household electricity prices by 4 percent since 2020, from 11.91 cents to 12.4 cents/kWh. Yet that's piddling next to the world's "greenest" economy: Germany.



Credit: Leonora Enkling. License: <https://bit.ly/3ouHEL5>.

Activists dream of meeting jacked-up electricity demands with wind turbines and solar panels. Even if this massive construction project is completed, the turbines won't produce anything once the wind stops blowing at the 7–9 miles per hour minimum that most turbines need to produce electricity—a frequent occurrence.

Still Looking for a Place in the Sun

Starting in 2010, the Germans embarked on a \$4 trillion "energy transition" (*Energiewende*) to replace all fossil fuels and nuclear plants with solar panels, dams, geothermal plants, and wind turbines. "No country has spent more money forcing the adoption of renewable energy than Germany," writes RealClearEnergy editor Jude Clemente.

Despite spending billions, those sources together account for only 26 percent of the country's power production. Yet Germany already has the highest electricity rates in the world at 37 cents/kWh, higher than even the priciest "green" U.S. states. A renewables surcharge accounts for a stunning 23 percent of German electricity bills. As one commentator puts it:

Renewable energy advocates like to say we should be a lot more like Germany when it comes to generating more electricity from wind and solar. This argument often goes like this: "Wind and solar are already less expensive than fossil fuels, and greedy corporations are the only reason we don't have a clean energy revolution!!!"

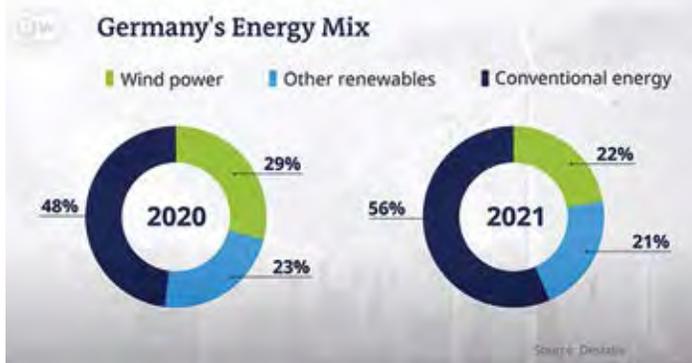
My question for people making this argument is, "If renewables are so gosh-darn cheap, why does Germany now have the highest electricity prices in Europe?"

The unexpected cold snap in February 2021—when temperatures hit 5°F—rendered tens of thousands of solar panels and turbines frozen stiff and useless, leaving Germans dependent on the country's remaining coal and nuclear plants running at full capacity to (barely) keep the lights on. At least 20 homeless people died, making it one of the deadliest winters in recent years in one of the world's most resource-rich nations.

High winds also threatened structural failure of ice-coated, overloaded power transmission infrastructure, creating the possibility of a cascading blackout across the already unstable European power grid, as occurred in 2006 when a downed German powerline led to outages as far away as Portugal and Greece.

Now the country is desperately looking to expand imports of liquefied natural gas via oil-burning container vessels in order to weaken its dependence on Russian gas pipelines, which supply 50–60 percent of Germany's natural gas. The lesson for Americans, Clemente notes, is that eliminating coal and nuclear has only made gas "more essential."

At least Germany, the "green man of Europe," still supports natural gas. What happens when eco-activists in the U.S. declare even that off-limits?



At least Germany, the “green man of Europe,” still supports natural gas. What happens when eco-activists in the U.S. declare even that off-limits?

The Activists Pushing Forced Electrification

Yet unbelievable as it sounds, “electrify everything” is the watchword of today’s environmentalists. Dozens of groups are demanding forced electrification policies.

The Sierra Club is leading the charge with a \$74 million anti-fossil fuel campaign, equivalent to 47 percent of the group’s total budget in 2019. The group has a fundamentalist approach to combating America’s “dirtiest energy sources,” a message it began with coal and has since expanded to natural gas.

The Sierra Club and another environmentalist group, the Colorado-based Rocky Mountain Institute, have declared cooking with gas *verboten* because stoves can generate pollutants leading to respiratory illnesses, so every appliance must be all-electric. Both are heavily funded by the ClimateWorks Foundation, a pass-through set up by the liberal Hewlett and Packard Foundations.

At least one group—Evergreen Action—stands to gain financially from this transformation. The group is a front for the Sixteen Thirty Fund, part of a \$715 million “dark money” network run by the left-wing consultancy Arabella Advisors. We’ve traced at least \$250,000 from the Hewlett Foundation to Evergreen.

Evergreen demands a national reconstruction mandate to retrofit buildings against the threat of global warming. The Green New Deal proposed a similar mandate to “retrofit every building in America.” It’s a union handout, since the contracts would go to Big Labor, but there’s also billions of dollars at stake for construction firms and consultants in unnecessary government giveaway. Bracken Hendricks, Evergreen’s founder, runs one of the consulting firms which stand to cash out from the policies he demands: Urban Ingenuity,

Credit: DW News. License: <https://bit.ly/3jmoRxo>.

which “provides innovative solutions to develop and finance advanced energy projects, building retrofits, and state of the art clean energy infrastructure” to construction developers.

Great work, if you can get it.

Rewiring America is another Arabella-run campaign to remake the economy, a front for the Windward Fund. Rewiring America calls for a World War II–style mass mobilization to make war on ourselves, abolishing carbon-emitting energy sources and electrifying everything. Co-founder Saul Griffith admits that he’s a “science-y engineer,” not an economist, but promises that his plan for providing federal “climate loans” to retrofit buildings will triple U.S. energy production. Proving that left-wing foundations will fund just about anything, Rewiring America has received at least \$300,000 from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

Numerous smaller activist groups are pushing for local gas bans, such as the San Diego Building Electrification Coalition, Solar Rights Alliance, Building Decarbonization Coalition, the electric vehicle subsidies group Plug In America, and Zero Emission Transportation Association.

“Net-Zero Carbon”: A Recipe for Disaster

Activists point out that the transportation and electricity generation sectors together account for 54 percent of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions. Turning them carbon-free would dramatically lower total U.S. emissions—hence, mandates for electric vehicles and non-nuclear renewables.

That’s true in the sense that the 14th-century Black Death dramatically lowered medieval European emissions by killing 200 million CO₂-exhaling people. In other words, some medicines are worse than the disease, and most folks won’t want to swallow what the Left is prescribing.

Dick Storm, a registered professional engineer with 50 years of experience in the energy industry, writes about the “stupidity” of trying to run a modern economy on “net-zero carbon” emissions. He calls the idea “insane, foolish, and simply not possible ... unless our standard of living and productive capacity as a nation are severely compromised.”



The 14th-century Black Death dramatically lowered medieval European emissions by killing 200 million CO₂-exhaling people.

Storm believes that Green New Deal-type plans for decarbonizing America hinge on electrifying homes and vehicles. “There are huge challenges to ‘electrifying everything’ given just how much energy we use annually, he told me.

Americans consume roughly 100 quadrillion BTUs (British thermal units) each year, 37 percent of which goes to electricity generation, 28 percent to transportation, and almost 12 percent to the residential sector.

“A slow transition to EVs [electric vehicles] can be easily handled, since only about 4 percent (11 million) vehicles on the road are electric,” he explained. “But a rapid transition of the entire transportation sector”—such as the radical Left proposes—“would mean that our electricity generation would have to drastically increase to accommodate the 28 percent of energy needed by transportation and 12 percent used by residential buildings.”

In other words, the country would almost overnight need to produce *vastly* more electricity on the grid to power those additional planes, cars, trucks, and home appliances. I asked him about the likelihood of states funding this extreme overhaul of existing infrastructure. “If they’re relying on renewables other than nuclear, not likely,” he said.

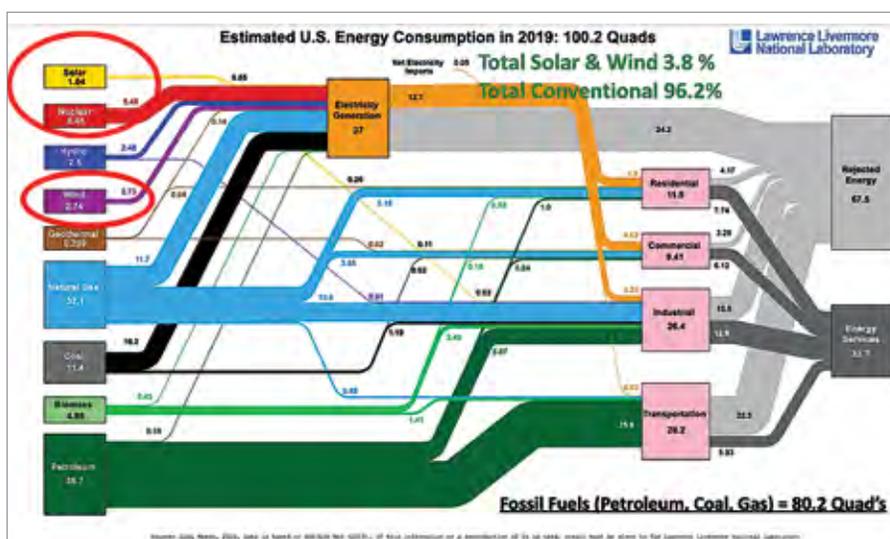
Building so much extra power-generating infrastructure is expensive and a waste of money and resources. But it becomes *impossible* if natural gas is banned. (Recall that carbon-free nuclear energy is off the table for most activists given their decades-old opposition to nuclear plants.)

Activists dream of meeting jacked-up electricity demands with wind turbines and solar panels. For Long Island, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) has suggested building a 9,000 mega-watt offshore turbine farm by 2035. “Placing the turbines will require building very long high-voltage transmission lines across Long Island, underwater, and then across much of New York State just to reach central New York,” Storm points out.

Even if this massive construction project is completed, the turbines won’t produce anything once the wind stops blowing at the 7–9 miles per hour minimum that most turbines need to produce electricity—a frequent occurrence. The traditional backup source for these weather-dependent “unreliables” is natural gas, which kicks on when they shut off to balance demand on the grid. Without backups, the grid would certainly fail. New York state already gets 50 percent of its electricity from gas—so what happens when it’s banned?

The bottom line, as Storm sees it, is that too many politicians have been sucked into a misguided war on carbon, “completely missing a commonsense approach to improving power generation while cleaning the environment in a logical, methodical way producing domestic oil and gas and remaining energy independent. A practical approach would include all fuels, especially new nuclear plants.”

Regrettably, consumers have almost no one in their corner fighting these mandates. “Don’t expect electric utility companies to oppose the mandates since they force increased electricity production and therefore sales, while added costs can be passed along to customers.”



Credit: Dick Storm/Lawrence Livermore National Lab. License: <https://bit.ly/2Xy9j7>.

Hope You Like Buying Chinese

The Biden administration has already set a goal to force the electricity sector to reach net-zero carbon dioxide emissions by 2035, which means generating an additional 4 trillion kilowatt-hours (kWh) largely from wind turbines and solar panels, which currently produce only 10.7 percent of the country’s electricity. Biden’s infrastructure bill, which as of writing has passed the Senate with bipartisan support and is stuck in the House, would allocate \$148 billion to achieving that and other climate goals.

If you’re the Chinese Communist Party, that’s music to your ears. Chinese companies currently manufacture close to 30 percent of the world’s wind turbines

Dick Storm, a registered professional engineer with 50 years of experience in the energy industry, writes about the “stupidity” of trying to run a modern economy on “net-zero carbon” emissions.

and a whopping 71 percent of all solar panels in the world, making communist China the industry's largest country of origin for the Left's favorite "clean energy" sources.

Since the U.S. manufactures just 10 percent of global wind turbines and only 3 percent of all solar panels, it's really a mandate to buy Chinese goods—much of them produced by enslaved Muslim Uyghurs—shipped on oil-burning cargo ships. All of this is an effort to make Americans feel better about their carbon footprint.

Grassroots Rising

Yet there's good news: People are starting to fight back.

After Washington Gov. Jay Inslee (D), a noted climate hawk, tried to institute a statewide ban on new natural gas hookups, Spokane residents started an initiative in August to block the city council from imposing a gas ban without residents' consent.

In 19 largely Republican-led states, legislatures have enacted or are considering legislation to block local governments from enacting natural gas bans, accounting for one-third of national gas consumption. Many of the bills came in response to Biden's call for accelerating electrification demands in May.

Others have pointed out that Latin American and Indian food relies on cooking with flame. In San Francisco, Chinese and Filipino chefs are protesting against the local ban because of how poorly electric stoves cook food in a wok. One executive chef, George Chen, told the *Wall Street Journal*:

I have respect for the environment, and I drive an electric car and am happy to pay the extra costs because the technology is good. But to say that an electric stove is as good as a gas one is misunderstanding the art of cooking.

Despite calls from the International Energy Agency for countries to cancel new oil and gas development, industry analysts believe "it is highly unlikely that oil demand will decline meaningfully over the next decade, even with a stronger push by world governments toward net-zero emissions." It's simply too precious and integral to growing economies worldwide.

President Biden's own Energy Department projects a coming oil and gas boom, cementing these dreaded fossil fuels as the bedrock of global energy production in future decades when demand is expected to rise by 47 percent. Even California is currently building five "temporary" natural gas plants "to prevent blackouts" resulting in part from increased dependence on solar panels and wind



Credit: Jay and Trudi Inslee. License: <https://bit.ly/3nvt1ku>.

After Washington Gov. Jay Inslee (D), a noted climate hawk, tried to institute a statewide ban on new natural gas hookups, Spokane residents started an initiative in August to block the city council from imposing a gas ban without residents' consent.

turbines. Experts believe that the state's spiking electricity prices will only "discourage electrification" in favor of gas-fed appliances.

Other observers believe that government-imposed gas bans will actually *increase* gas consumption:

With the current state of electricity generation, increasing electricity consumption means increasing natural gas consumption, which is ill-advised when using electricity for heating. Making electricity is hard and using it for heating is a waste akin to carving a beautiful wooden sculpture and then burning it to boil water for soup. ... [T]hese proposals are ultimately increasing our carbon footprint.

Gas reserves are high, and major technological advances have made it easier than ever to extract them. There's a reason so many Big Oil companies have invested heavily in gas extraction while publicly fretting about climate change—global warming is great for business. Royal Dutch Shell put it best in 2015 with the announcement that the company was transitioning from an "oil-and-gas" to a "gas-and-oil" company.

Forget the Green New Deal and "saving" the environment. Americans are beginning to discover that this war on their standard of living is the *true* face of environmentalism. They aren't buying it. ■

Read previous articles from the Green Watch series online at [CapitalResearch.org/category/green-watch/](https://www.CapitalResearch.org/category/green-watch/).



THE LEFT'S VOTING MACHINE

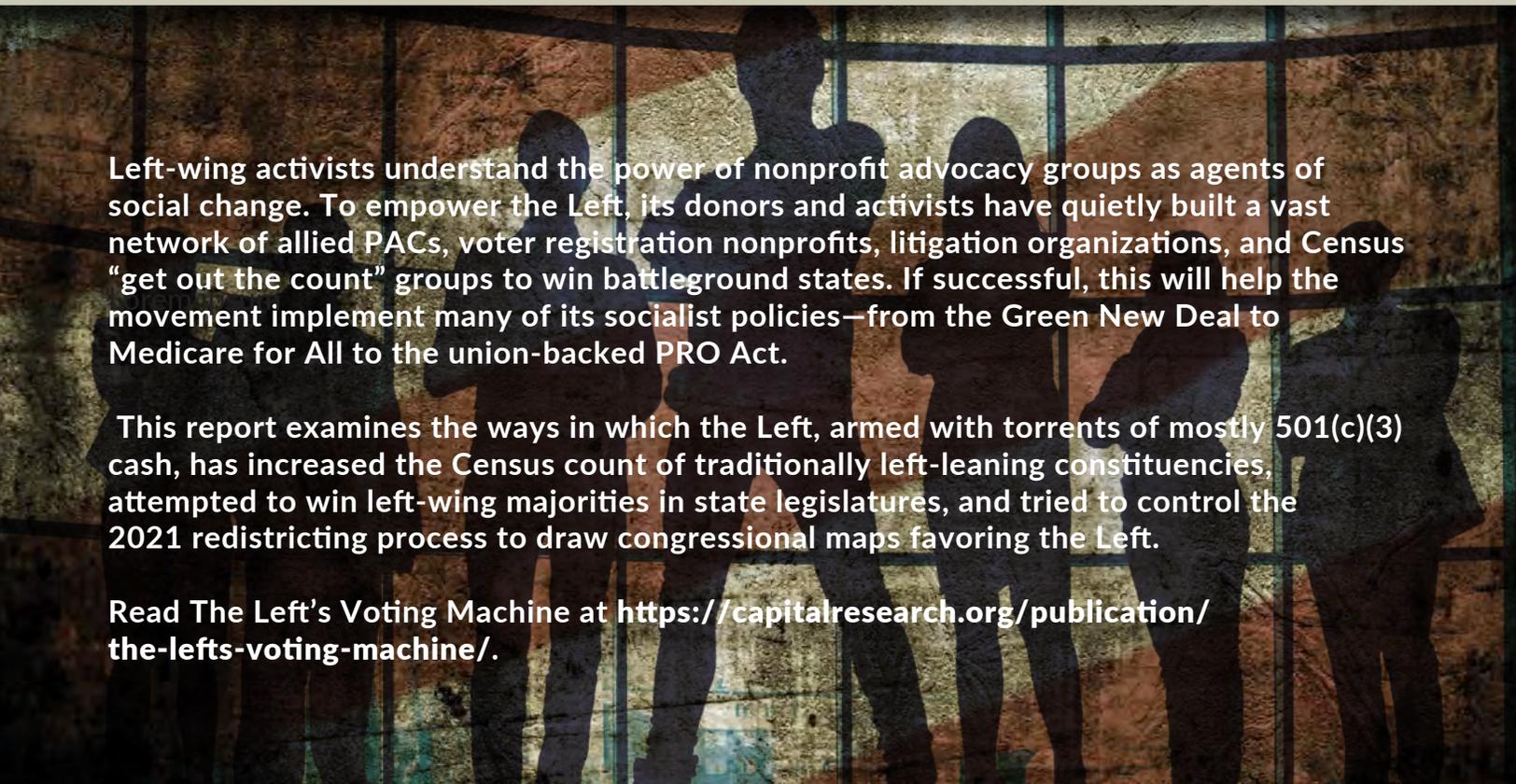


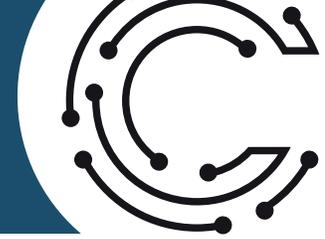
CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

Left-wing activists understand the power of nonprofit advocacy groups as agents of social change. 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. If successful, this will help the movement implement many of its socialist policies—from the Green New Deal to Medicare for All to the union-backed PRO Act.

This report examines the ways in which the Left, armed with torrents of mostly 501(c)(3) cash, has increased the Census count of traditionally left-leaning constituencies, attempted to win left-wing majorities in state legislatures, and tried to control the 2021 redistricting process to draw congressional maps favoring the Left.

Read *The Left's Voting Machine* at <https://capitalresearch.org/publication/the-lefts-voting-machine/>.





ORGANIZING AGAINST AMERICA: BIG GOVERNMENT'S WORKERS TAKE OVER BIG LABOR

By Ken Braun

Summary: Most of American union members work for government. Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Calvin Coolidge, Franklin Roosevelt, and Ronald Reagan each warned against the dangers of public-sector unions that threatened to replace representative government with politicians effectively hired and controlled by those same unions. Collective bargaining has allowed public-sector unions to organize against the American people.

Most of American union members work for government. In 2020, more than 7.1 million public employees were unionized, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Most of the other 7 million union members worked in private industries, many expected to be profit-making.

In the mid-1970s, as government unions were marching to majority status, future President Ronald Reagan predicted a problem: “Forced unionization of public employees threatens to replace our elected officials with an undemocratic private government.” Reagan wasn’t channeling conservative dogma on the point. Far from it. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, architect of the New Deal and supporter of private-sector unionism, expressed nearly identical concerns four decades earlier.

The evolution of American labor into a movement dominated by government workers is a relatively recent development. A report from the Economic Policy Institute (a labor union-backed research nonprofit) estimates that as late as 1961 fewer than one million government workers were unionized, versus 14.5 million private-sector union members.

The conquest of Big Labor by Big Government workers was arguably completed in 1995 when John Sweeney was elected president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations ((AFL-CIO). The AFL-CIO is a federation that includes most of America’s labor unions and represents a majority of American union members. Sweeney, previously the president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), was the first AFL-CIO chief elected from a member union controlled by pub-



Credit: C-SPAN. License: <https://bit.ly/3m26u2N>.

Under Lane Kirkland’s direction, the AFL-CIO sent an estimated \$6 million (almost \$20 million in 2021 dollars) to help keep Lech Wałęsa’s Solidarity alive.

lic employees. The two-million-member SEIU is today the nation’s second largest union of any type, and more than one million of its members are government workers.

Sweeney’s predecessor as AFL-CIO president, Lane Kirkland, died three years later. The difference between the old and new AFL-CIO was apparent at Kirkland’s September 1999 memorial service, where he was eulogized by Lech Wałęsa, a former Polish political dissident and leader of Poland’s *Solidarność* (Solidarity) shipyard trade union.

Ken Braun is CRC’s senior investigative researcher and authors profiles for InfluenceWatch.org.

Wałęsa had won the Nobel Peace Prize, the Cold War, and then the presidency of a free Poland. In 1980, his Solidarity union launched a labor strike against Poland's Soviet-backed regime, and the strike grew into one of the ideological bombs that blew up the Soviet Empire. Under Lane Kirkland's direction, the AFL-CIO sent an estimated \$6 million (almost \$20 million in 2021 dollars) to help keep Solidarity alive.

"I never had enough opportunity to thank Lane Kirkland for his enormous contribution for our struggle for a better world," said Wałęsa in his memorial tribute.

But shortly after Kirkland was pushed out as AFL-CIO president, his successor won warm praise from the *losing side* of the Cold War. Gus Hall, leader (and four-time presidential candidate) of the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) wrote approvingly that John Sweeney had the AFL-CIO "involved in a process of radicalization and militancy" and that the "radical shift in both leadership and policy is a very positive, even historic change." During the same years that Kirkland had helped Wałęsa and his allies risk their lives to resist Soviet Bloc tyrants, Gus Hall and the CPUSA were receiving subsidies and taking orders from the Soviet Union.

The AFL-CIO that Lane Kirkland spent his life building ceased to exist in 1996, barely outlasting the Soviet Union he helped topple. Realizing he didn't have the votes from the membership to win reelection as president, Kirkland resigned in the summer of 1995. Within months Thomas Donahue, his interim replacement, was swept from office by Sweeney.

By December 1995, shortly after his ascension to the AFL-CIO presidency, Sweeney was taking the union federation to the left and speaking with admiration about the destructive power of more militant behavior:

I couldn't help but be impressed with what is going on in France. In this country, when we're faced with cuts in vital services that benefit workers and the poor, we shut down a few parts of the government. In France, the workers shut down the country—even though only 8 percent of the work force is organized!

Demographically, this AFL-CIO coup by the radical ideology of government-worker unions was long overdue. By 1996, there were already nearly 6.9 million unionized public-sector employees—mostly in state and local government—who accounted for a dominant 42 percent of American labor union membership. Manufacturing unions,

the next largest industry sector, had fewer than 3.4 million union members.

Labor unions made up of members *paid directly* by tax dollars have a profoundly different agenda for government policy than private-sector union workers who simply pay taxes to government like the rest of us. A little more than a century ago, Americans started to become concerned about this fundamental difference and what it meant for representative government.

"An Intolerable Crime Against Civilization"

A private-sector union boss leads employees in an adversarial relationship against a private corporation over corporate policy, pay, and the size of the workforce (among other issues). But a public-sector union boss represents the employees of the people's government in an adversarial relationship with *the American people*, who are not directly seated at the bargaining table.

Because the workplace policy issues under dispute are *government* policies, the union boss has the power of an unelected policymaker doing the bidding of just a tiny fraction of the people—those who benefit directly from a larger and more expensive government.

A concrete example of this concern was clear more than 120 years ago when both government and labor unions were much smaller. Daniel DiSalvo, professor of political science at the City College of New York, wrote that in the late 19th century an organized association of "postal workers besieged Congress seeking higher pay and promotions" and that their "excessive lobbying led Congress to enact measures in 1901 that limited the ability of government workers to influence the federal government."

This restriction notwithstanding, membership in government-worker unions continued to grow steadily. By 1910, according to Joseph Slater, a professor at the University of



A public-sector union boss represents the employees of the people's government in an adversarial relationship with the American people, who are not directly seated at the bargaining table.

Toledo College of Law, “union density in the public sector was 3.5 percent.” By 1921 it had reached 7.2 percent, which Slater noted took place during a “simultaneous expansion of government” after 1915.

But skepticism toward government-worker unions increased sharply because of the Boston Police Strike of 1919.

Citing low wages and poor working conditions, the Boston police attempted to unionize and affiliate with the American Federation of Labor, then under the leadership of its co-founder, Samuel Gompers. (The AFL and Congress of Industrial Organizations wouldn’t merge into the AFL-CIO until 1955). Boston Police Commissioner Edwin Curtis rejected the unionization request by the police. In response, an overwhelming majority of the force—1,147 officers—voted to strike and abandoned their posts on September 9, 1919.

Three days of looting, rioting, extensive property destruction and general lawlessness ensued. A volunteer replacement police force was overwhelmed and overrun. Calvin Coolidge, then the governor of Massachusetts, met the violence with a show of force, sending in 7,000 national guardsmen who engaged the mob with gunfire. Order was restored at the cost of 23 wounded and nine dead.

Commissioner Curtis fired all the striking officers. Gompers appealed to Coolidge to intervene and overrule Curtis. In a September 14 telegram reply to the labor leader, the governor contemptuously refused:

Your assertion that the Commissioner was wrong cannot justify the wrong of leaving the city unguarded. That furnished the opportunity, the criminal element furnished the action. There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time. You ask that the public safety again be placed in the hands of these same policemen while they continue in disobedience to the laws of Massachusetts.

Two days earlier, President Woodrow Wilson made a similar observation during a speech in Coeur D’Alene, Idaho: “Have you not been reading in the papers of the intolerable thing that has just happened in Boston? When the police of a great city walk out and leave that city to be looted they have committed an intolerable crime against civilization.”

All the striking officers were replaced, and the episode turned Coolidge into a “national hero,” as noted by Hillsdale College history professor Paul Moreno.

Later in 1919, Coolidge won reelection as governor with the greatest margin of any successful gubernatorial candidate in Massachusetts history at the time. Afterward, President Wilson, a Democrat, sent a supportive telegram to the Republican governor: “I congratulate you upon your election as a victory for law and order. When that is the issue, all Americans stand together.”

In the 1920 presidential election the following year, Wilson was not a candidate. Coolidge was nominated as the vice-presidential candidate on the GOP ticket with Warren Harding. The Republican ticket won, President Harding died in 1923, and Coolidge moved into the White House.

It was a historical turning point. Labor law professor Joseph Slater wrote that the 1919 police strike in Boston was “a disaster” for government-worker unions: “The aftermath of the Boston strike significantly damaged public sector unionism. Many local governments banned not just police unions, but also all forms of public sector unions.”

Stagnation: 1920–1960

The bad taste from Boston stalled public-sector union growth until the 1960s. Even as late as 1960, fewer than one million government workers were unionized.

But political and legal developments during those intervening years laid the foundation for an explosion in membership growth.

In 1935, Congress approved and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed the National Labor Relations Act, arguably organized labor’s greatest legislative achievement in the United States. Colloquially known as the Wagner Act, the law guaranteed the rights to form private-sector labor unions, to collectively bargain against a private-sector employer, and to strike against private-sector employers.

But federal, state, and local government employees were excluded. A supporter of the Wagner Act, even President Roosevelt considered its provisions a dangerous fit for public-sector workers.

In an August 1937 letter to the president of the National Federation of Federal Employees, FDR spoke of the “meticulous attention” that “should be paid to the special relation-

ships and obligations of public servants to the public itself and to the Government.”

In a harbinger of Ronald Reagan’s warning four decades later, Roosevelt cautioned that empowering government-worker unions was a threat to representative government:

All Government employees should realize that the process of collective bargaining, as usually understood, cannot be transplanted into the public service. It has its distinct and insurmountable limitations when applied to public personnel management. The very nature and purposes of Government make it impossible for administrative officials to represent fully or to bind the employer in mutual discussions with Government employee organizations. The employer is the whole people, who speak by means of laws enacted by their representatives in Congress.

Although AFL-CIO chief John Sweeney would later praise the militant labor bosses shutting down France in the 1990s, the New Deal president was adamantly opposed to insolent government employees:

Particularly, I want to emphasize my conviction that militant tactics have no place in the functions of any organization of Government employees. Upon employees in the Federal service rests the obligation to serve the whole people, whose interests and welfare require orderliness and continuity in the conduct of Government activities. This obligation is paramount. Since their own services have to do with the functioning of the Government, a strike of public employees manifests nothing less than an intent on their part to prevent or obstruct the operations of Government until their demands are satisfied. Such action, looking toward the paralysis of Government by those who have sworn to support it, is unthinkable and intolerable.

However, despite this widespread animosity toward granting collective bargaining rights to government workers, some of what would later become today’s largest government-worker unions—and largest unions overall—got their start during the era.

In 1932 a few dozen state workers in Wisconsin formed the Wisconsin State Employees Association. By 1935 similar groups had been created in 30 states. In 1936, they banded together and formed the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).

The SEIU was founded in 1921. The American Federation of Teachers had already been admitted to the American Federation of Labor a few years earlier in 1916. The National Teachers Association, later the National Education Association, formed in 1857, but since then has not affiliated within the AFL-CIO.

These developments notwithstanding, a bias against public-worker unions remained acceptable even within the labor movement itself. As late as 1955, George Meany, the first president of the united AFL-CIO, declared it “impossible to bargain collectively with the government.”

AFSCME’s “Angel of Death”

Jerry Wurf didn’t agree. Born in 1919, the same year the Boston police strike crippled the immediate future of public-sector unions, nobody did more than Wurf to reverse that setback.

A member of the Young People’s Socialist League in his youth, he was a lifelong admirer of Norman Thomas, the long-time leader and six-time presidential candidate of the Socialist Party. As a young adult in the early 1940s Wurf’s leftist connections led to a position with the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union in New York City. The organizing tactics he used against Jewish cafeteria owners were so rough that they nicknamed him “Mal’ach Hamaves,” Yiddish for the “Angel of Death.”

Shortly afterward, Wurf briefly tried to run a delicatessen of his own ... and failed. One might assume there was schadenfreude and waves of ironic laughter among the business owners in New York City’s hospitality industry.

In 1947 the Angel of Death returned to labor organizing in New York City, but this time with AFSCME, targeting city workers. Started in 1944, the New York AFSCME local was in disarray, with a future that (according to the union’s official history) was “rocky and unpromising.” Wurf whipped it into what a *New York Times* labor reporter referred to as a “potent labor organization.”

In 1954, Wurf’s forces pressured New York Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Jr. to allow union membership by city employees and create a grievance hearing system. In 1958, Wagner granted collective bargaining to city unions and made them the exclusive bargaining voice for workers. The executive order was nicknamed the Little Wagner Act—the mayor was the son of the U.S. senator for whom the 1935 Wagner Act was named.



Credit: [digital.lib.uk.edu](https://bit.ly/3uSRH77). License: <https://bit.ly/3uSRH77>.

(William Lucy, P.J. Chiampa, Jerry Wurf, and others unnamed) In the early 1940s Wurf's leftist connections led to a position with the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union in New York City. The organizing tactics he used against Jewish cafeteria owners were so rough that they nicknamed him "Mal'ach Hamaves," Yiddish for the "Angel of Death."

This made New York City the first American city to recognize collective bargaining by its workers. In 1959, Wisconsin became the first state to recognize it, also at the instigation of AFSCME.

Then, Congress tried to get into the act for federal workers. According to labor analyst Daniel DiSalvo, President John F. Kennedy tried to head this off in 1962 with Executive Order 10988, which provided more limited bargaining rights to federal workers. DiSalvo observed that JFK hoped the half measure would "block unionization of employees in the defense sector."

Instead, JFK helped break the dam open for public-sector unions. By 1966, 16 other states permitted some form of

CC _____
A big spike in government-worker union strikes was another of Jerry Wurf's legacies.

public-worker collective bargaining. By 1980, a majority had.

Public union membership shot up tenfold from 400,000 in 1955 to 4 million by 1970. A major driver was the addition of organized (but non-union) government employee associations, such as the National Education Association, that converted into labor unions to take advantage of new collective bargaining privileges.

Jerry Wurf deserves a large share of the credit (or blame) for these developments. By 1964 the Angel of Death had become the AFSCME national president. He held the post until 1981 and left his mark as one of the most influential labor leaders of the 20th century. AFSCME membership was 250,000 the year after he took command, and he grew it to more than one million by 1978.

After Wurf went national, Victor Gotbaum succeeded him as the leader of Wurf's old New York City AFSCME local. In 1975, Gotbaum confirmed that the worst fears about government-worker unionization undermining representative

government were coming true. "There's no question about it," Gotbaum boasted to the *New York Times*. "We have the ability, in a sense, to elect our own boss."

A July 1975 *New York Times* editorial featured this quote from Gotbaum and implicitly excoriated the Angel of Death's legacy—a perspective unrecognizable for those who now know its editorial page as a rampart of the Democratic establishment:

The effect of this extraordinary union clout can be readily seen in the astonishing spectacle of captive politicians falling all over each other in Albany and City Hall to impose still higher taxes on the over-taxed citizens of New York City in order to preserve union jobs. ... [Union leaders] accuse advocates of a pay freeze of being inhumane and anti-labor. In fact it is the municipal union chieftains themselves who are antilabor in the sense that it is the laboring men and women who work in but not for the city who will bear the brunt of the taxes required to sustain and sweeten what are already the most liberal municipal pay and fringe benefits in the nation.

Striking Against Public Safety

A big spike in government-worker union strikes was another of Wurf's legacies.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics recorded only 36 strikes by 28,600 government employees in 1960, resulting in 58,400 days of lost work by all laborers.

By 1970 this had shot up to 412 strikes by more than 333,000 government workers and more than 2 million combined days of lost work. More than 126,000 striking public school and library employees accounted for more than half of the 2 million lost days of work. (The lopsided representation by teachers and other employees of public schools is not a surprise, as today the National Education Association and American Federation of Teachers have a combined membership of 4.7 million).

Strikes by police and other public safety officers also returned as a tactic deployed by AFSCME and its Angel of Death.

In July 1974, AFSCME led 2,500 sanitation, corrections, and other government workers in a strike against the city of Baltimore. This led to riots among jail inmates and garbage pileups under the hot summer sun.

Then 1,300 of Baltimore's 2,300 police officers, also AFSCME members, walked off the job. According to the account from the Baltimore Police Historical Society, the looting by criminal elements began as soon as the police picket lines appeared. One looter was shot dead by a non-striking officer. Fire alarms increased to where the fire department was fielding hundreds of alarms each day. The uncollected garbage was a frequent target of the arsonists.

Even in the days before the strike the AFSCME police union members were deliberately gumming up their jobs. Traffic tickets increased 1,000 percent, including two citations on the mayor's car. Officers wrote up and filed extensive "found property" reports on any loose change they discovered, such as a few pennies. The narcotics crime lab was sent samples to examine that were obviously legal tobacco.

The picket line by the Baltimore police was counterprotested by 14 young men carrying signs that read: "Safety First; Money Second." Jerry Wurf was widely quoted with a different prescription: "Let Baltimore burn."

Similar drama occurred in New York City the following year when a July 1975 sanitation strike led to garbage piling up on summer days. Displaying their own grievances, NYPD officers shut down the Brooklyn Bridge, carrying signs reading "Cops Out, Crime In" and "Burn City Burn."

That same summer AFSCME led a strike by 76,000 state workers in Pennsylvania. Gerald McEntee, the local AFSCME official (and later head of the national union), told his members to "go out and close down this God-damned state." McEntee reappears later in this story as a top orchestrator of the 1995 takeover of the AFL-CIO by government employee unions.

Into the early 1980s, strikes by police, sanitation workers, firefighters, and other city workers spread to cities across America.

The home of San Francisco's mayor was bombed during a police strike in 1975. The terrorized mayor overruled his board of supervisors and gave in to the demands of the cops. *New York Times* columnist William Safire commented on the incident: "Whenever policemen put their guns to a city's head, they create a police state. ... Dereliction of



PATCO's new leadership, emboldened by past successes, thought it could win the point with an illegal strike.

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PATCO also threatened service interruptions timed to disrupt the January 1977 inauguration of President Jimmy Carter and as a result won concessions from the government.

duty is a crime, and not a prelude to collective bargaining.”

And a crime it was. Nearly all these strikes by police, fire, and even teachers were (and remain) illegal. In most states that permitted government-worker collective bargaining and unions, mandatory independent arbitration to resolve labor disputes was authorized in place of granting unions the power to strike.

But to Big Labor bosses, the illegality of holding basic government services hostage was a feature of the 1970s strike wave, not a bug. In 1973, American Federation of Teachers president Al Shanker wrote: “One of the greatest reasons for the effectiveness of the public employees’ strike is the fact that it is illegal.”

In the same essay Shanker acknowledged the unique economic advantage public-worker unions have over the taxpayers in these actions: “A private employer can pull out his books and show that he’s going to go out of business if he pays more, but government can’t.”

The “Crushing Defeat” of PATCO

These illegal public-worker picket lines continued to experience only modest resistance until 1981, when one of them ran into Ronald Reagan.

The Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) was created in 1968 after President Kennedy’s 1961 executive order permitted collective bargaining by federal employees. With varying degrees of success, PATCO used its control over air travel safety to wrangle what it wanted from the taxpayers. While technically not engaging in an illegal strike, the union staged work slowdowns, sick-outs, and other service delays in 1968, 1969, 1970, 1974, and into the Ford administration.

PATCO also threatened service interruptions timed to disrupt the January 1977 inauguration of President Jimmy Carter and as a result won concessions from the govern-



President Ronald Reagan with William French Smith making a statement to the press regarding the air traffic controllers strike (PATCO) from the Rose Garden. August 3, 1981.

ment. Labor law professor Joseph Slater wrote that by 1977 the nine-year-old PATCO had established a reputation as “one of the most aggressive of all the unions in the federal government.”

In 1980, the aggressive PATCO membership ousted their president, John Leyden, and replaced him with a more bellicose and strike-inclined Bob Poli. The American people also fired their president that year and hired Ronald Reagan. Himself a former Screen Actors Guild union leader, Reagan won the endorsement of PATCO during the 1980 election by promising the air controllers improved equipment and better work schedules.

What they wanted was higher pay, but federal law did not allow this to be a subject of negotiations with government-worker unions. The federal air controller dispute was building into another battle over the old concerns about public-worker unions subverting representative government. PATCO’s new leadership, emboldened by past successes, thought it could win the point with an illegal strike.

Credit: White House. License: Public domain.

Despite the prohibition on pay negotiations, Reagan's team offered PATCO an 11 percent pay increase (double the average hike other federal employees would receive) and other concessions.

The air controllers rejected the offer and voted to strike. On August 3, 1981, more than 12,000 of them walked off the job. President Reagan told them to return to work within 48 hours or they would be fired. Most refused and were terminated. Air travel was temporarily disrupted, but Reagan held firm. The fired controllers were permanently replaced and banned from future employment with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

In a 2019 book, labor reporter Steven Greenhouse quoted a striking air traffic controller on the thinking that led to their miscalculation and the defeat of the union:

We were so used to winning. We got everything we wanted from the slowdown. We got everything we wanted from the sick-out. We thought our battle was with the FAA, and not the president of the United States, and we were used to kicking the FAA's ass. ... We never considered the possibility of losing.

In 2013, Joseph Slater wrote that the "crushing defeat of this strike is one of the most important events in all of labor relations—not just the public sector—of the past half century." Reagan had hiked the price of public-employee strikes. "Through the 1980s," concluded Slater, "strikes decreased in the public sector, and in the private sector, strikebreaking—through the use of permanent replacement workers—increased dramatically."

In late 1981, it may have been tempting to compare Reagan's firing of the air controllers with the roughly similar circumstances and outcome of the Boston police strike in 1919. But where Boston had resulted in decades of difficulty and stagnation for public-sector unions, quite the opposite happened after the PATCO walkout. Government-worker unions had become so big and strong by the 1980s that they didn't need strikes anymore.

Electing Their Own Bosses

In 1921, two years after the Boston police walked out, there were far fewer public-sector employees, and only 7.2 percent of them were unionized. This grew to only 11 percent as late as 1960. But by 1981 public-sector unions could claim nearly 40 percent of all government workers, and 5.7 million total members.

In 1980, the National Education Association (NEA) alone claimed 1.8 million. The *Washington Post* reported that year that the NEA was "far and away the biggest interest-group force in Democratic presidential politics" and had "exerted the kind of clout on the party platform that other interest groups can only envy." The NEA sent more delegates to the 1980 Democratic National Convention than any labor union in the history of the Democratic Party, far more than the giant industrial unions such as the United Auto Workers (UAW). The NEA's 276-strong delegation rivaled the largest states: California sent 306.

Just the two teacher unions were so big that their membership and money could already elect school boards, state legislators, and governors. On top of the NEA's massive membership, the American Federation of Teachers claimed at least another 500,000 members in 1980.

Like the boast of the AFSCME chief from New York City in 1975, by 1980 the public-sector union heads could hire their own bosses (i.e., elect politicians). Those bosses, as American Federation of Teachers (AFT) chief Al Shanker had already observed, had the power to tap a seemingly bottomless pit of tax dollars to pay what public unions wanted.

Why hold an illegal strike when the same outcome could be purchased legally on election day?

In the 10 years after the PATCO strike, government-worker union membership shot up by almost another million public employees, from 5.7 million in 1981 to 6.6 million in 1991. Over the same period, private-sector unions lost a staggering 5 million members.

Private-sector union leaders couldn't boast of having the power to elect their own boss. Even if the UAW could still claim the power to elect a governor of Michigan in the 1980s, that governor couldn't tell General Motors how to pay its employees.

This was the background for the October 1995 takeover of the AFL-CIO by the government-worker unions. Gerald McEntee, who succeeded Jerry Wurf as AFSCME boss, was a major partner in the coalition that elbowed Lane Kirkland aside and elevated SEIU chief John Sweeney. Linda Chavez-Thompson, an AFSCME vice president, was elected on the Sweeney slate as the AFL-CIO executive vice president.

When Sweeney passed away in early 2021, the Twitter account for the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) eulogized him as a "former DSA member." In a 2021 commentary for Jacobin, a socialist website, history professor Nelson Lichtenstein praised Sweeney's AFL-CIO leadership for putting the American labor movement "clearly" on the



Credit: AFL-CIO. License: <https://bit.ly/3G5wudj>.

Gus Hall (not shown), leader of the Communist Party USA wrote approvingly that John Sweeney had the AFL-CIO “involved in a process of radicalization and militancy” and that the “radical shift in both leadership and policy is a very positive, even historic change.”

“left flank of the Democratic Party” for the first time since shortly after World War II.

Sweeney’s leftward lurch with the AFL-CIO started early. In 1996, reporter Matt Labash of the right-leaning *Weekly Standard* analyzed Sweeney’s first year in charge. Labash wrote that Sweeney had steered the AFL-CIO into new alliances with socialist-curious groups such as ACORN, the Institute for Policy Studies, and Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition. Of the initial staffing changes at the AFL-CIO, Labash concluded: “Sweeney has elevated so many red-diaper babies, activists-at-large, and other New Leftovers that a listing of them would be longer than the Port Huron alumni directory.”

Similarly, for decades the National Education Association has strayed away from public education concerns into left-leaning positions on issues such as firearms restrictions and abortion. The NEA has never been an AFL-CIO member union, but with 3 million current members (all public employees) it is America’s largest individual labor union of any type.

Sweeney’s SEIU is also a reliable sponsor of numerous left-wing causes, such as the Progressive Congress Action Fund, MoveOn.org, and Al Sharpton’s National Action Network. The SEIU disaffiliated from the AFL-CIO (then

still led by Sweeney) in 2005 amid an inter-union power struggle largely over strategic differences on how to increase union membership.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics (CRP), donors associated with the AFL-CIO, the two teacher unions, and other unions dominated by government workers such as the SEIU contributed at least \$94.9 million to federal political causes during the 2020 election. Nearly all this public-sector union money (CRP estimates 90 percent) went to left-leaning advocacy organizations or to support Democratic candidates.

Yet this total includes only federal election spending. It does not count even more electioneering and spending by state and local affiliates of these same

unions to elect state legislators, judges, governors, and school board members.

If Presidents Roosevelt, Reagan, Wilson, and Coolidge could have a discussion, it would be difficult to obtain unanimous agreement from them on just about any major domestic policy controversy. But these four very different men were of one mind on the danger that giving collective bargaining power to government workers posed to representative government.

After this risk was ignored, it took less than three decades for public-sector employee unions to obtain disproportionate influence over their own bosses. As noted above, a New York City AFSCME union official in the 1970s was already bold enough to boast that the city’s government employees had the power to hire the politicians who were supposed to be controlling them.

This power over the people’s representatives in government was taken from the people unionized government workers were supposed to be working for. Collective bargaining allowed public-sector unions to organize against the American people. ■

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Political and Policy-Oriented Giving After *Citizens United*: An Update to CRC's 2017 Analysis

CRC's update to the 2017 report found: In the 2018 election cycle, liberal grantmakers increased their public policy 501(c)(3) giving, increasing the imbalance from nearly 3.4 to 1 in 2014 to 3.7 to 1 (\$8.1 billion to \$2.2 billion) in 2018. "Dark money" funding through 501(c)(4) groups flipped from a 3.6 to 1 advantage for conservatives to a nearly 2 to 1 (\$81 million to \$42 million) advantage for liberals.



NONPROFITS AND POLITICS IN THE ARGUMENT: THE ORIGINS OF A TREND

By Robert Stilson

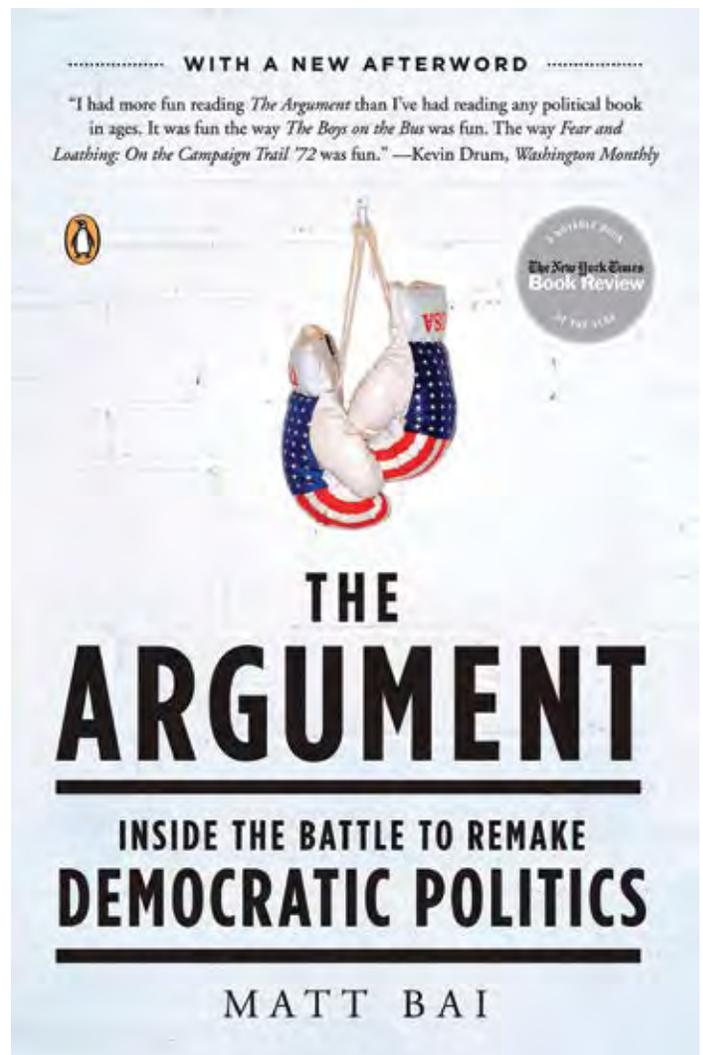
The Capital Research Center (CRC) specializes in investigating how left-of-center nonprofits impact American public policy and how such groups are funded. Independent nonpartisan nonprofits can greatly influence issues that affect electoral outcomes, even without directly involving themselves in partisan politics.

CRC has published reports analyzing different categories of political spending over past election cycles, finding that aggregate revenues of selected liberal and conservative public policy 501(c)(3) nonprofits have increased since the 2006 cycle. Those increases were especially significant on the left, and CRC has traced multiple threads of this phenomenon back to roughly the 2004 cycle when President George W. Bush was reelected despite unprecedented Democratic efforts at making him a one-term president.

A firsthand account of the multifront internecine conflict between the Democratic Party's grassroots and establishment that characterized this era was published by journalist Matt Bai in 2007 as *The Argument: Inside the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics*. The book has many interesting takeaways—it's a well-written, entertaining read—but one takeaway that may not have been fully appreciated at the time of its publication was its glimpse into a nascent swell of politically motivated funding that was beginning to be directed toward independent left-leaning nonprofits.

The events chronicled in *The Argument* largely take place between 2004 and 2006—an era before the Obama presidency that admittedly feels like a lifetime ago in American politics. For the newest soon-to-be voters in the 2022 cycle, the 2004 election *was* a lifetime ago.

The soul-searching and finger-pointing among Democrats in the shadow of that election are a dominant theme of the book. Outsider “progressives” (a term Bai notes was being intentionally employed because the word “liberal” invoked negative connotations among the public) were agitating against what they saw as a Democratic establishment dominated by Clintonian centrism and the machinations of Washington insiders. These activists were geographically diffuse, keen to adopt new methods of organizing and



Credit: Amazon. License: <https://amzn.to/3jBerB5>.

*A firsthand account of the multifront internecine conflict between the Democratic Party's grassroots and establishment that characterized this era was published by journalist Matt Bai in 2007 as *The Argument: Inside the Battle to Remake Democratic Politics*.*

Robert Stilson is a research specialist at CRC who runs several of CRC's specialized projects, including a series on federal grants and nonprofits.

fundraising, and more assertively left-wing (they would say “progressive”) than many in their party’s leadership.

Much of the book’s narrative focuses on these activists and the ways that prominent Democratic politicians of various ideological dispositions interacted with them. *The Argument* explores the rise of MoveOn, “the group that embodied the liberal backlash against the democratic ethos of the booming 90s” and that heralded the end of “the days when political parties held a monopoly on organizing their constituents.”

Bai also had a firsthand look at another form of online activism: the “netroots” blogging world represented by Daily Kos and the politicians like Howard Dean and Ned Lamont who attracted that world’s left-wing anti-establishment views. All told, the book is an intriguing snapshot of a particularly contentious period of Democratic politics just before the ascendancy of Barack Obama, who makes several appearances toward the end.

Fifteen years of political hindsight, combined with the author’s first-person perspective, make *The Argument* effectively a primary source history for readers in 2021. As such works age, their value increasingly lies as much in explaining subsequent trends and observations as in simply chronicling past events. Today’s readers can easily draw threads and parallels from the tribulations of the mid-2000s Democratic Party right through the presidential campaigns of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump, alongside many other political developments.

Among the more interesting threads spun from the book’s pages is the burgeoning influence of independent public policy nonprofits on the American political landscape. For *The Argument*, Bai had a unique insight into the development and early history of what would become one of the most important funding networks driving this development, at least on the left: the Democracy Alliance.

Democracy Alliance Is Born

Today, the Democracy Alliance bills itself as “a preeminent network of donors dedicated to building the progressive movement in the United States.” Individual alliance members, known as “partners,” are expected to commit at least \$200,000 annually to groups recommended and approved by the alliance, while institutional members like labor unions are expected to contribute at least \$1 million. It is important to understand that the Democracy Alliance largely functions to coordinate and channel contributions from partners directly to these groups, rather than operating



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“The donors had had enough,” Matt Bai writes, of giving money “to Democratic Party committees or to groups like the Sierra Club and Emily’s [sic] List,” watching Democrats lose and then having “all the same people ... back six months later, asking for more checks.”

as a grantmaker itself. Scholars have described it as “a kind of progressive investment marketplace.”

As of September 2021, the alliance’s website listed 30 “high-impact, progressive organizations” that it recommends to partners as part of its core investment portfolio. It also provided a partially overlapping list of 60 groups engaged in “defending democratic values, institutions, and norms” and maintains three State POWER Funds that “address the long-term needs of progressive organizations at the state and local level.” In past years, the alliance has also approved secondary lists of dozens of additional groups for partner funding as part of a “progressive infrastructure map.”

“Scholars have described Democracy Alliance as “a kind of progressive investment marketplace.”

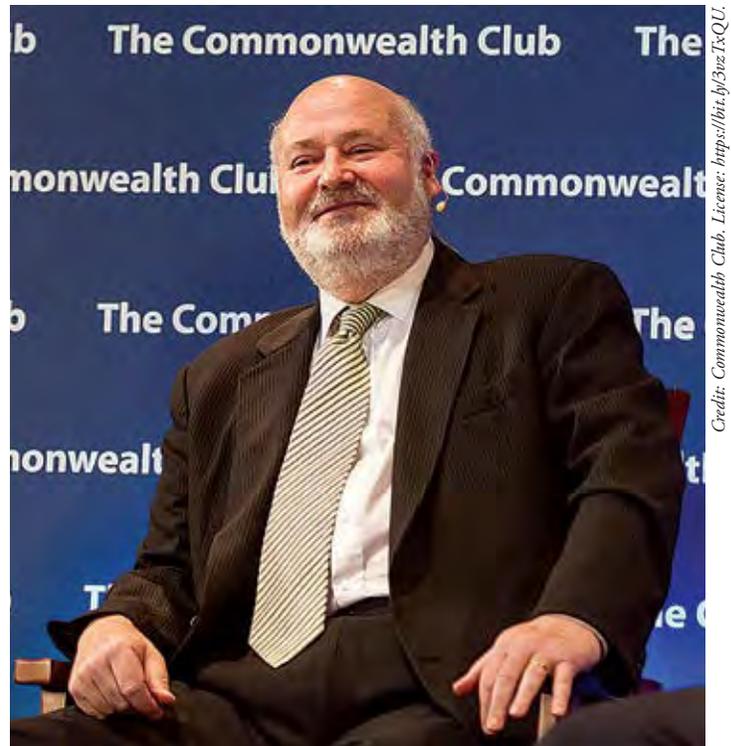
Of the 30 groups in the alliance’s main portfolio—what it calls “the core of DA’s work”—almost all are nonprofits. More than half are 501(c)(3)s, while most of the remainder are 501(c)(4)s. Many listed groups, however, maintain connected—though legally separate—affiliates with different tax statuses. For example, the 501(c)(3) Center for American Progress is affiliated with the 501(c)(4) Center for American Progress Action Fund. On its website, the Democracy Alliance typically links to whichever entity is generally considered to be the primary organizational arm.

It is perhaps not intuitive that what has grown to become one of the most influential political funding networks on the American left principally recommends that its partners give to nonprofits—particularly to 501(c)(3)s. Reasons probably include the fact that federal campaign contributions are capped and that an individual’s gift to such nonprofits need not be publicly disclosed. In the case of 501(c)(3) groups, contributions are tax-deductible. Serious money is involved: According to *The Washington Free Beacon*, confidential documents from 2019 revealed that “the Democracy Alliance’s partners have infused \$1.83 billion into the left since its inception.”

That “inception” is what Bai chronicles in *The Argument*, and it points to another explanation for the alliance’s focus on funding nonprofits: Wealthy individuals were simply looking for effective ways to deploy their wealth in order to achieve the liberal political outcomes that they desired. One lesson many of these donors took from Republican victories in the 2004 elections was that the methods they had been using simply were not working.

In that campaign, for example, billionaires George Soros and Peter Lewis each gave upward of \$20 million to the political action committee America Coming Together (ACT) and a related group called the Media Fund. Bai notes that ACT’s “army of door knockers” and its “database of Democratic voters” had set up, “for the first time ever, an alternative structure to the Democratic Party’s voter turnout machine.” He writes that Soros “had spent almost \$30 million of his own fortune to unseat the president” and “[i]n all of American history, no small group of partisans had ever invested so much money to win a single campaign.”

When Bush ultimately prevailed (and in truth, even before the election), there was significant consternation among the Left’s moneyed interests. “The donors had had enough,” Bai writes, of giving money “to Democratic Party committees or to groups like the Sierra Club and Emily’s [*sic*] List,” watching Democrats lose and then having “all the same people ... back six months later, asking for more checks.” Wealthy



Hollywood’s Rob Reiner summed up the basic frustration in an interview with Bai. He had given Democrats millions of dollars over the years, but felt he had very little to show for it: “[H]e had watched as the party found itself continually rolled by Republicans and beaten at the polls.”

donors were tired of “being treated like an ATM with arms and legs.” They were ready to try something new, especially in the aftermath of an “election that had left them feeling confused and deflated.”

Hollywood’s Rob Reiner summed up the basic frustration in an interview with Bai. He had given Democrats millions of dollars over the years, but felt he had very little to show for it: “[H]e had watched as the party found itself continually rolled by Republicans and beaten at the polls.” Reiner’s millions simply had not had the impact he wanted on the nation’s politics. Bai noted what he called a “curious irony”:

The strange truth was that the zillionaires who responded to Rob’s slide show had come to see themselves, however improbably, as the oppressed. They knew they were right about what was best for the country, and if the voters didn’t see that as clearly as they did, then it could only be explained by some nefarious conservative plot. They imagined themselves to be victimized and powerless, kept down, somehow, by the Man.

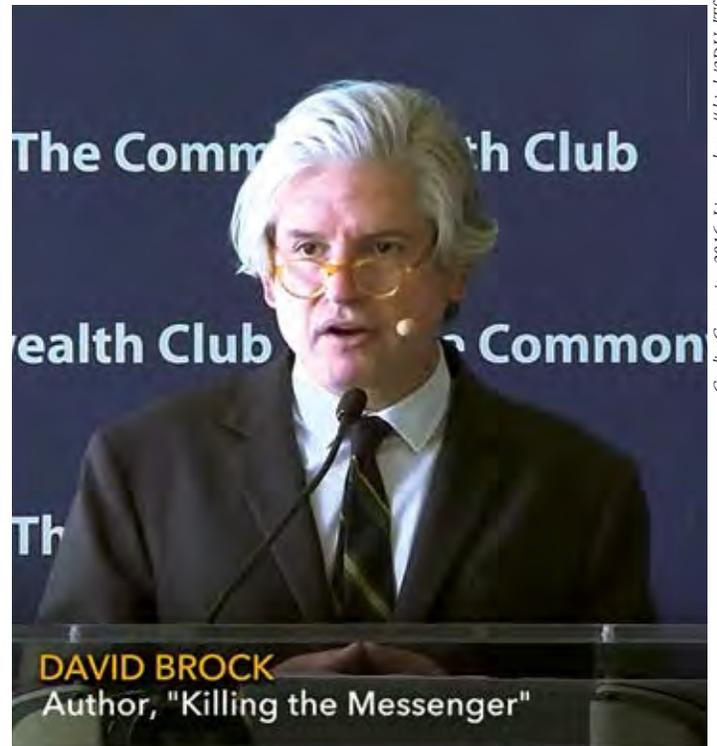
“Rob’s slide show” refers not to Rob Reiner (though it did make an impression on him), but to the PowerPoint presentation created by attorney and political operative Rob Stein that is generally credited with sowing the seeds of what would ultimately become the Democracy Alliance. As recounted in *The Argument*, the slide show detailed Stein’s research on how a relatively small number of right-of-center funders had created the “infrastructure” underlying modern conservatism, largely by giving money to independent think tanks and advocacy groups—nonprofits—which had in turn developed and messaged the policy ideas that had gradually shifted America’s electorate to the right.

Stein’s position was that Democrats were losing elections because they lacked anything comparable. To win, they needed to invest in long-term liberalism by bankrolling the independent policy groups that could develop and promote their ideological agenda for them. He had been pitching this idea to donors since 2003 and had begun to attract some serious attention, but Republican victories in the 2004 elections were what really brought a sense of immediacy to the project.

Winning Elections

The first official gathering of the Democracy Alliance occurred five months after Bush’s reelection, in April 2005. By the second conference six months later, alliance partners had pledged \$39 million to the first round of recommended groups, with George Soros alone accounting for more than a quarter of that and Peter Lewis serving as another major funder. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU)—which Bai notes was “a major source of cash and manpower for Democratic campaigns”—would soon become the alliance’s first institutional partner, largely through the efforts of its then-President Andy Stern. The SEIU would commit more than \$5 million to the network by the spring of 2006 and even housed the alliance’s offices at its headquarters in Washington, DC.

A tension ran through the Democracy Alliance from the beginning, though. It related to two distinct goals that Bai observed the donors “liked to pretend” were the same, but were not: “winning back control of Congress, on the one hand, and overhauling the party, on the other.” A survey of the more than 50 partners who attended the first official conference revealed that 86 percent felt the alliance should focus on long-term objectives, rather than seek short-term results. No doubt the partners held this view sincerely—it was in accordance with Stein’s original vision for the alliance.



Credit: Campaign 2016. License: <https://bit.ly/3DUp1Tf>

John Podesta (not shown) and David Brock were promised “a minimum of \$9 million and \$7 million, respectively, over two years”—presumably referring to their respective nonprofits: the Center for American Progress and Media Matters for America.

However, when it came time to award the first round of funding to recommended organizations, Bai noted that the 10 groups selected were “focused overwhelmingly on the machinery of elections rather than the substance behind them.” John Podesta and David Brock were promised “a minimum of \$9 million and \$7 million, respectively, over two years”—presumably referring to their respective nonprofits: the Center for American Progress and Media Matters for America. Other early alliance-funded nonprofits included the Economic Policy Institute and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

By the spring of 2006, at the alliance’s next conference in Austin, Texas, 18 more groups were approved for funding. They included EMILY’s List, the Sierra Club, People for the American Way, ACORN, and the New Democrat Network. All except EMILY’s List were 501(c)(4) nonprofits. The partners also wrote checks to 501(c)(3) groups “that were supposed to help progressives appeal to religious voters,” like Sojourners and the Gamaliel Foundation. According to Bai, “all [the partners] could think about was funding any group that seemed to have a strategy to deliver the House and the Senate.” Stein’s original long-term



The main goal of the Democracy Alliance was to rid the country of conservative majorities.

vision, he wrote, had been “replaced by an explosion of smaller, single-year grants to many of the same well-funded groups that had been part of the [Democratic] party’s election machine for decades.”

This is an important point. Although a major part of the Democracy Alliance’s mission is to foster “the infrastructure necessary to advance a progressive agenda for America,” it has always maintained a clear and simultaneous focus on electoral cycles and partisan politics. *The Argument* relates that, even early on, many alliance partners “were in no frame of mind to push short-term, electoral considerations into the background. Their main goal was to rid the country of conservative majorities, preferably in the next election.” This makes sense: It was the Bush presidency generally—and the war in Iraq specifically—more than anything else that galvanized many of the alliance’s original partners. Indeed, alliance partners had contributed more than \$100 million by the start of the 2008 primary season, and “most of that money was focused in some way on winning back the White House.”

This focus on elections has remained consistent. Internal documents from 2019 boasted that “electoral victories from 2006 to 2018 bear the stamp of these coordinated investments made by DA Partners.” Democracy Alliance president Gara LaMarche wrote prior to the 2016 election that turnout among the “new American majority”—which he defines as non-whites, young people, women, and “progressive white voters”—was the “one sure path to a progressive victory” over Donald Trump. The next year, after Trump’s victory, the alliance launched its New American Majority Fund to finance efforts to “implement successful voter mobilization campaigns; help elect progressive candidates; and pass progressive policy changes at the state level.”

“The translation of a burgeoning resistance movement into electoral strength” was a “key theme” of the fall 2017 alliance conference. That was “what the Democracy Alliance and its allies are working and hoping for.” In 2020, LaMarche wrote, “We are going all out for victory” to “boot Donald Trump and his enablers from Washington.” He asked readers to “ratchet up your electoral activities—giving money, making calls and sending texts, registering voters, turning out the vote and working at the polls.” All of these

“electoral activities” can, of course, be performed by independent nonprofit groups like those recommended by the Democracy Alliance.

Funding Nonprofits

If the central role that partisan politics and electoral outcomes have always played in the Democracy Alliance is the first important point to remember, the second is that independent nonprofits have always been the primary types of organizations that the alliance has recommended to its funding partners. Nearly all the groups identified in *The Argument* as among the first recipients of alliance money were such nonprofits.

There are critical (though not always clear) legal restrictions on how nonprofits may involve themselves in elections. Basically, 501(c)(3)s are categorically prohibited from “directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for elective public office.” Voter registration, get-out-the-vote, and other voter education activities are permitted, but must not “have the effect of favoring a candidate or group of candidates.” However, 501(c)(4) nonprofits may engage in substantially more direct political activities—endorsing candidates, making independent expenditures, etc.—as long as these do not become their primary activity.

Nothing suggests that the Democracy Alliance’s activities have violated any of these restrictions. Documents indicate that the alliance is attentive to the requirements of applicable nonprofit law. Yet even with these requirements in place, nonprofits are still seen as playing an important role in America’s political landscape and in electoral outcomes. It’s also a role that appears to be growing. Funding directed toward ideologically left-of-center nonprofits has swelled since at least the 2004 election cycle. The Democracy Alliance is one notable part of this trend.

Consider the budgetary growth of the alliance’s recommended organizations during that time. The Center for American Progress, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Economic Policy Institute, and Media Matters for America are all 501(c)(3) nonprofits identified in *The Argument* as among the earliest recipients of Democracy Alliance funding, and all remain core alliance-recommended



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groups to this day. In 2004, these four nonprofits had combined revenues of about \$37.6 million. Adjusted for inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index, that would have come out to just over \$50 million 2019 dollars. But the actual combined 2019 revenues of those four groups exceeded \$126.2 million.

This trend is consistent across many alliance-recommended groups. Faith in Action (formerly known as PICO National Network) had 2004 revenues of about \$5 million. By 2019 its annual revenue exceeded \$23 million. The National Employment Law Project brought in less than \$1.6 million in 2005, but more than \$10.6 million by 2019. The Brennan Center for Justice went from about \$4.4 million in 2003 to \$84.5 million in 2020, while the Advancement Project jumped from approximately \$3.5 million to \$15.8 million from 2004 to 2019. All these groups operate as 501(c)(3) nonprofits.

It is also worth noting that many of the nonprofits the Democracy Alliance recommends today didn't even exist when the alliance was founded or were essentially brand new. America Votes, the Center for American Progress, ProgressNow, Re:Power (formerly known as Wellstone Action), and Working America were all founded in 2003—the same year that Rob Stein started showing his PowerPoint presentation. Catalist, Media Matters for America, and Color of Change popped up between 2004 and 2006—roughly the period chronicled in *The Argument*. Others came about even later: the 501(c)(3) Center for Popular Democracy was established in 2012, merged with another group in 2014, and brought in almost \$103 million total from 2017 to 2019.

The alliance, while steering vast sums of money into groups like these, was of course neither solely responsible for their creation, nor for their budgetary growth. More money has simply been flowing through the ideological nonprofit sector in general. Another example CRC has covered extensively is the consulting firm Arabella Advisors. It was also founded in 2005 and today manages four in-house nonprofits that collectively channel hundreds of millions of dollars to left-of-center groups. Those four nonprofits—three 501(c)(3)s and one 501(c)(4)—have collectively brought in more than \$3 billion since 2006, including more than \$730 million in just 2019. They also provide fiscal sponsorship services to scores of left-leaning “projects,” including several affiliated with the Democracy Alliance.

A Snapshot of Nonprofit Funding

Recent updates to a CRC study analyzing the revenues of liberal and conservative 501(c)(3) public policy nonprofits found that revenues of 906 selected left-of-center groups increased from just under \$5 billion in 2006 to just over \$8 billion in 2018, while revenues of 298 selected right-of-center groups increased from about \$1.27 billion to just over \$2.2 billion over that same period. This snapshot of the ideological nonprofit world suggests that while funding to such 501(c)(3)s has ramped up on both sides of the spectrum, the resources available to the left may be substantially larger. In *The Argument*, readers will find an important account of the origins of this trend.

Read previous articles from the Organization Trends series online at CapitalResearch.org/category/organization-trends/.

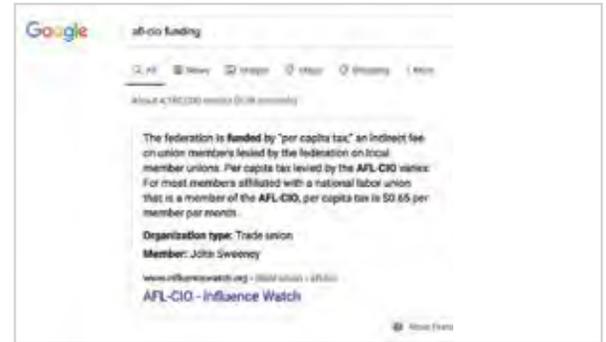


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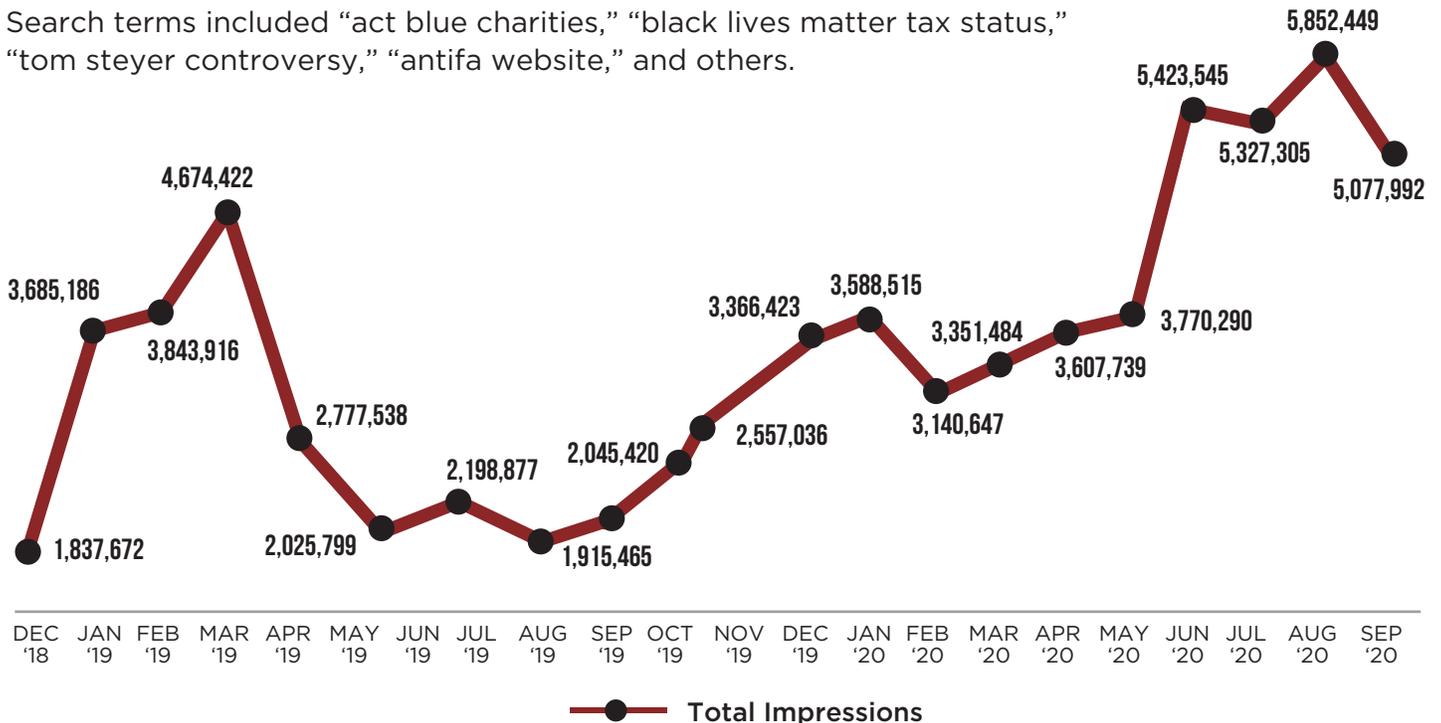
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