



LEFT-WING SHAREHOLDERS' PROGRESSIVELY ESG ACTIVISM

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THE LEFT'S VOTING MACHINE

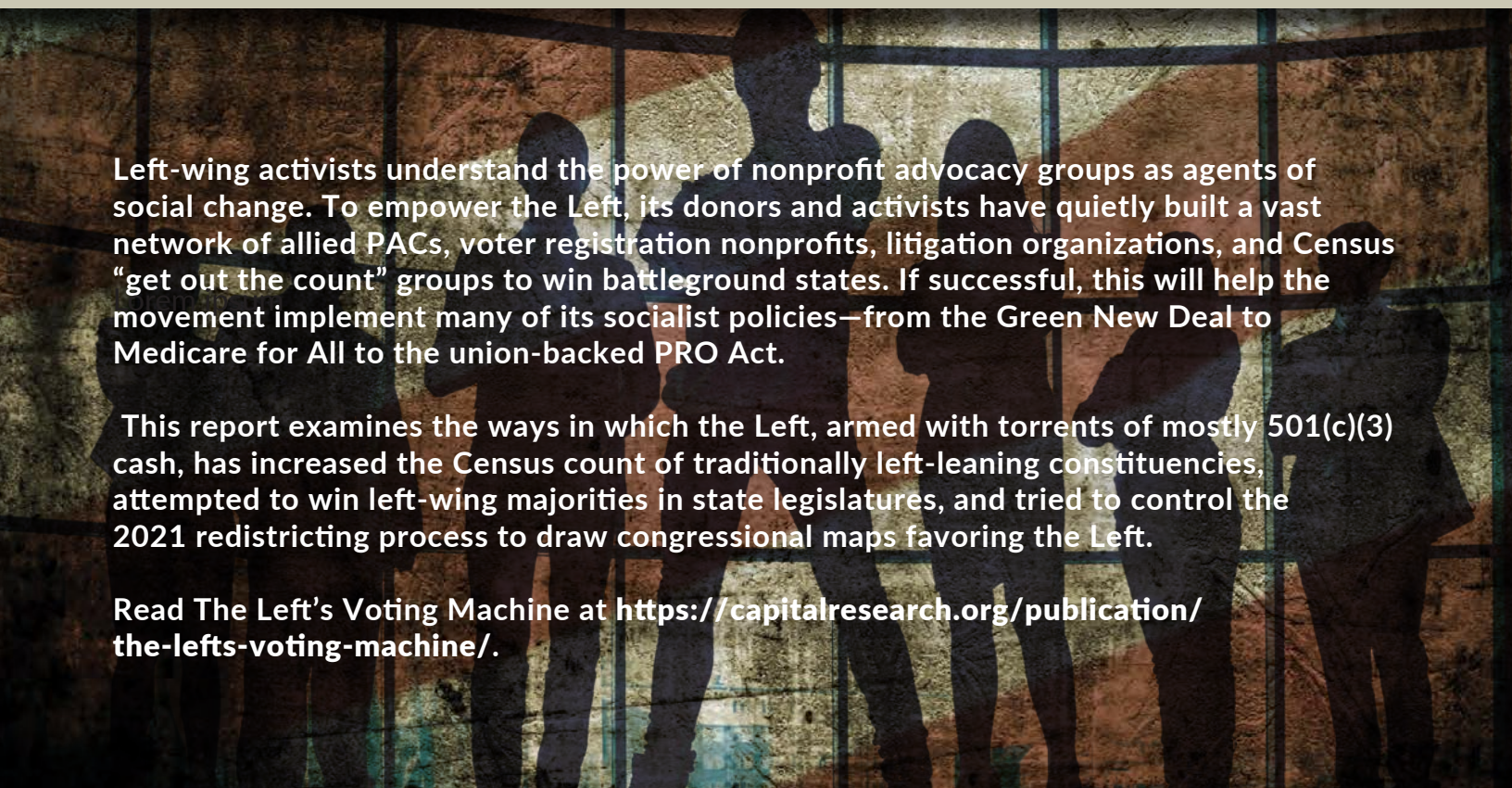


CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK

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/>.



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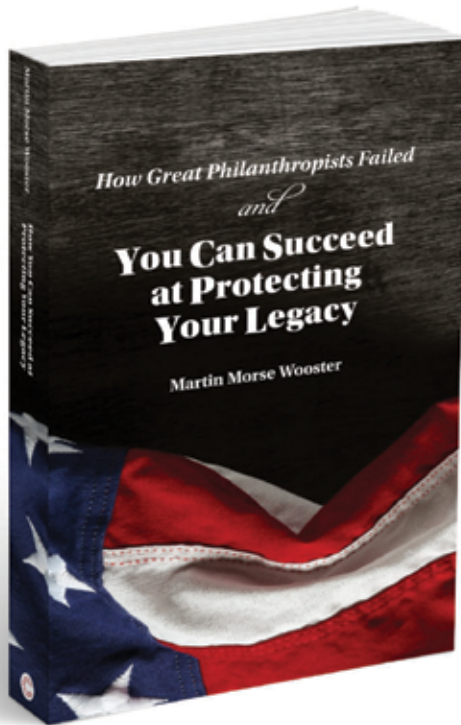
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Is Your Legacy Safe?



An instructive and cautionary tale for our time.

—W.J. Hume,
Jaquelin Hume Foundation

This is a must read for anyone thinking about establishing a private foundation.

—Linda Childears,
President and CEO, The Daniels Fund

No, your legacy is not safe.

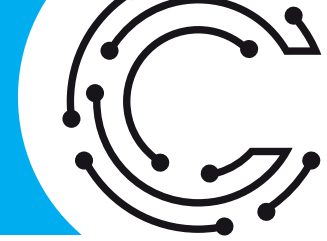
It is hard enough to give well when you're living. After you're gone, the odds of successful giving are stacked even higher against you. Entrepreneurial geniuses like Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and Henry Ford were rarely tricked out of their money in business deals. But when they gave their money away, they failed to have their intentions respected.

This fascinating book covers the history of some of the biggest philanthropic mistakes and offers practical tips on how to protect your legacy. Everyone who wants to use their money to change the world needs to read this book.

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AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK



AN ANTI-GUN PLEDGE FOR LAW STUDENTS

It's the new theater in the messaging war.

By Robert Stilson

Gun control activists have been broadly unsuccessful on the legislative and judicial fronts, forcing them to devise alternative methods of curtailing the Second Amendment rights of Americans. One tactic involves attempting to influence the career trajectory of future lawyers.

A new campaign seeks to persuade law students to pledge never to represent the firearms industry or other pro-gun interests in their future legal practice. It is yet another example of how anti-gun activists are increasingly looking to achieve their ultimate policy ends by undermining the industry itself, as well as attempting to delegitimize the entire culture of responsible gun ownership common to much of American society.

“I Will Not Work For...”

According to an April 27 press release announcing the campaign, new lawyers are “often forced” by their firms to represent “irresponsible” members of the firearms industry. To combat this alleged (and allegedly problematic) state of affairs, gun control activists have begun promoting a pledge among current law students. Its operative language reads as follows:



Credit: BR Photo Addicted. License: Shutterstock.

A new campaign seeks to persuade law students to pledge never to represent the firearms industry or other pro-gun interests in their future legal practice.

“I will not work for any firm that requires me to advocate on behalf of the gun industry or gun lobby. I will instead prioritize firms that actively fight gun violence and the industry that propagates it.”

The campaign thus seeks not only to discourage soon-to-be lawyers from providing legal representation to the firearms industry and other pro-gun interests, but also actively encourages them to attack those interests—to

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



When activists are unsuccessful at achieving their goals through traditional legislative and judicial routes, many turn to alternative means that they hope will ultimately achieve their desired ends.

“kneecap” and “put the squeeze on” gun manufacturers, in the words of the left-of-center *American Independent*. The ultimate objective is as much to make major law firms think twice about taking on pro-gun clients as it is to recruit individual signatories.

The “Law Student Gun Safety Pledge” is a joint project of the Giffords Law Center and March for Our Lives, two of the most prominent and well-funded gun control activist groups in the country. The 501(c)(3) nonprofit Giffords Law Center and its affiliated 501(c)(4) Giffords raised a combined \$20.1 million in 2021, while the 501(c)(4) March for Our Lives Action Fund and its affiliated 501(c)(3) March for Our Lives Foundation raised a combined \$5.3 million that same year—though that number presumably includes \$1.75 million that the March for Our Lives Foundation transferred to its sister 501(c)(4) arm.

These groups have reportedly held campus events to promote the pledge at some of the country’s most well-known law schools, including UC Berkeley School of Law, Cardozo School of Law (Yeshiva University), CUNY School of Law, Vanderbilt Law School, and Yale Law School. There are plans to expand the campaign to more schools this fall. Giffords Law Center deputy chief counsel David Pucino told the *American Independent* that the message being conveyed to future lawyers is that not “anyone is entitled to your representation,” most especially those “reprehensible” members of the firearms industry who supposedly “aid and abet the gun violence epidemic.”

The Activist’s Fallback

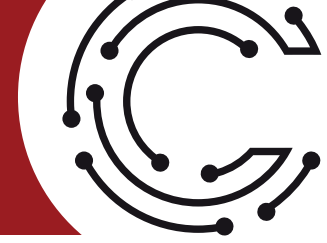
More broadly, the anti-gun pledge being promoted to America’s law students is illustrative of a couple of themes that are common to many issue advocates, but which have become especially pronounced within the world of gun control activism.

First, when activists are unsuccessful at achieving their goals through traditional legislative and judicial routes—as gun control advocates largely have been—many turn to alternative means that they hope will ultimately achieve their desired ends. This has manifested itself in a multi-pronged attack on the firearms industry itself, with the rationale apparently being that if actual legal constraints on gun ownership are frequently a political and/or constitutional non-starter, practical commercial constraints would be the next-best thing. It’s cynical and rather undemocratic, but to a dyed-in-the-wool activist it can seem rational.

The anti-gun pledge—and its hoped-for impact on law firm clientele—can also be viewed as part of a broader effort to delegitimize firearms within American cultural and business life by painting pro-gun interests as categorically unworthy of mainstream legal representation. It’s the new theater in the messaging war. Such societal “de-normalization” is the true long-term prerequisite to achieving the comprehensive gun control desired by many of today’s activists. ■

This article originally appeared in Legal Insurrection on June 22, 2023.

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



THE FORD FOUNDATION'S UGLY, WARPED VIEW OF AMERICA

By Ken Braun

Summary: *The Ford Foundation is filled with money earned a century ago by Henry Ford in gritty Dearborn, Michigan. But neither the family nor the automaker control it anymore. Decades ago, it was taken over by left-wing bureaucrats working in a glitzy New York City building. Everything the Ford Foundation does today can and probably should be understood from the perspective of well-paid would-be revolutionaries who sit atop a \$16 billion mountain of money and believe most Americans are irredeemably awful.*

Reporting net assets of \$16.4 billion at the end of 2022, the Ford Foundation has reliably been ranked for many recent years as one of the five wealthiest private foundations in the United States. The annual grants given away from Ford now range from \$700 million to \$1 billion. If it were a for-profit firm, it could have a market capitalization rivaling one of the nation's 500 largest publicly traded corporations.

The foundation is just part of the treasure amassed by auto titan Henry Ford, but today it is neither controlled by the Ford Motor Company nor the Ford family. Decades ago, the professional philanthrocrats controlling it decamped from where the money was earned—in gritty Dearborn, Michigan—to a glitzy building in New York City. Today, the foundation staffers collect \$79 million in annual salaries and benefits to give away Henry's money.

Henry Ford wouldn't recognize the awful America portrayed in the grants, but his confusion would be shared by most Americans living today.

For example, from the start of 2022 through July 2023, Ford gave at least 13 grants totaling more than \$8.4 million to NEO Philanthropy, which operates many left-leaning (and sometimes stridently left-leaning) political advocacy projects.

The Ford description for a grant to NEO's MPower Change project said the loot was meant "to build grassroots Muslim power while advancing social, spiritual, racial, and economic justice for all people." A social media meme promoted on the home page of MPower explains what this vague happy talk really means. It features a woman with a clenched fist



Credit: Shutterstock. License: <https://bit.ly/3yJdlDE>.

Decades ago, the professional philanthrocrats controlling the foundation decamped from where the money was earned—in gritty Dearborn, Michigan—to a glitzy building in New York City.

held high, holding a homemade sign reading "Capitalism Kills Workers: Rise-Up." Muslim-American entrepreneurs and other capitalists interested in accessing grassroots power of a non-revolutionary flavor will need to look elsewhere. The Ford staffers want change from Marxists.

One of history's great capitalists, Henry Ford was responsible for hiking the standard of living of his workers rather than killing them off. He was lucky he didn't live to see his life's work squandered to promote communist canards.

His grandson, Henry Ford II wasn't so fortunate. "The Deuce," as he was colloquially known, Henry II was another legendary leader of the eponymous automaker—and a sharp critic of the Ford Foundation's lefty lurch. In 1977, he publicly abandoned his trustee seat, leaving the foundation without a Ford on its board for decades thereafter.

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



But as with the MPower’s biased outreach to Muslims, what the “young people of color” YEF is looking for involves just one color: Democratic blue.



Credit: MPower. License: <https://bit.ly/3QeZisS>.

The meme on MPower’s webpage features a woman with a clenched fist held high, holding a homemade sign reading “Capitalism Kills Workers: Rise-Up.”



Credit: YEF. License: <https://bit.ly/3QeNpdJ>.

The second sentence on the YEF main page states that the group “serves as the megaphone for the youth civic engagement within the philanthropic sector.” Next to the statement is a young woman shouting into a bullhorn during a demonstration.

The MPower grant is merely a recent example of longstanding bad behavior

“In effect, the foundation is a creature of capitalism—a statement that, I’m sure, would be shocking to many professional staff in the field of philanthropy,” wrote The Duece in his acerbic resignation letter. “It is hard to discern recognition of this fact in anything the foundation does. It is even more difficult to find an understanding of this in many of the institutions, particularly the universities, that are the beneficiaries of the foundation’s grant programs.”

Henry Ford I had nothing to do with it and likely would have strongly objected, but the people in charge of his money have turned him into arguably American history’s biggest billionaire bankroller of the Left. Out of \$888.8 million in grants approved from January 2022 through July 2023, at least \$303 million (34 percent) went to left-leaning causes.

Another recent Ford grant for \$1,000,000 went to the Youth Engagement Fund (YEF). The grant description stipulates the funding was “to promote a more reflective and participatory democracy in the U.S. with a focus on strengthening civic participation by young people of color.” But as with the MPower’s biased outreach to Muslims, what the “young people of color” YEF is looking for involves just one color: Democratic blue.

Among many examples of the lopsided “civic participation” this funded is an evaluation of YEF’s work with state-level groups during the 2018 election. YEF predicted hopefully that directing resources to groups communicating with “Latinx” young adults would “increase turnout among this base, which tend to have more progressive views on policies than Anglo youth and the general electorate.”

Money for Megaphones and Militancy

The second sentence on the YEF main page states that the group “serves as the megaphone for the youth civic engagement within the philanthropic sector.” Next to the statement is a young woman shouting into a bullhorn during a demonstration.

The Women’s March Network, recipient of \$375,000 from Ford since 2022, literally brags of its street demonstrations and uses “WE ARE STILL THE RESISTANCE” as the slogan for its 2023 national conference.

The Sunrise Movement Education Fund received \$250,000 from Ford in June 2022. This is the education affiliate of the Sunrise Movement, a leftist clan so crazed that they have staged disruptive protests outside the offices of *Democrats* they deem insufficiently insane on climate and energy policy.

These and other examples totaling almost \$45.2 million in grants since 2022 show that promoting a militant leftist agenda or adorning a website home page with pictures of protesters yelling into amplified megaphones correlates closely with getting grants from Ford.

The Center for Popular Democracy (CPD) has received more than \$10.6 million since 2022. The CPD website boasts that the group has “consistently taken direct action” to advance its goals, and year-end reports for 2022 and 2021 each feature bullhorn-wielding demonstrators on the cover. In May 2023, demonstrators from the CPD Action Fund, the political advocacy arm of CPD, were arrested during a disruption inside congressional office buildings while protesting against debt-ceiling negotiations. Additional arrests occurred in 2018 when CPD claimed responsibility for demonstrations targeting Republican U.S. senators.

PowerSwitch Action, formerly known as the Partnership for Working Families, seeks a world where “land is commonly-owned” and an economy where “the rules for how goods are produced, services delivered, and wealth produced are governed democratically.” The Ford Foundation staffers appreciated the socialism enough to give at least \$9 million to PowerSwitch since 2022.

The advocacy group Demos promotes reparations for slavery, cancellation of student loan debt, and a government guarantee of a “good job to any individual who wants one.” In September 2022 the Ford Foundation gave Demos a \$6.5 million grant described as support for “building an economy and democracy that work for all Americans.”

Similarly, in December 2022 a \$350,000 Ford grant to “support the ecosystem of organizations working on truth, reconciliation, and reparations” was given to PolicyLink. Additional Ford funding for slavery reparations work included \$550,000 for the Decolonizing Wealth Project, a subsidiary of Allied Media Projects, and \$200,000 for Project Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations.



Credit: Florida Rising. License: <https://bit.ly/3Y4mPW>.

The 2021 Florida Rising report explicitly confirms that it is a “501c3 organization”—supposedly an educational group, not a political group. Such groups are permitted to register voters, under the assumption that democratic participation is a public good.

The Public Policy and Education Fund of New York (PPEF) was created as the think tank companion for Citizen Action New York, a left-wing advocacy group. According to its vision statement (which includes a photo of megaphone-armed protesters) Citizen Action is “battling against racial capitalism, the interacting oppressive forces of racism and capitalism that show themselves through inequality and bigotry.”

Racial capitalism is a socialist construct that argues racism is inextricable from capitalism. Since 2022 the Ford Foundation has given four grants totaling more than \$5.2 million to PPEF of New York.

Florida Rising Together is a left-wing voter mobilization nonprofit. The group’s 2021 Impact Report featured bullhorn toting demonstrators on the cover, and boasted that its “voter registration efforts” and “get out the vote programs” played a “critical role in changing the political conditions of the nation.” The mission statement claimed the group was devoted to making “progressive changes.”

The 2021 Florida Rising report explicitly confirms that it is a “501c3 organization”—supposedly an educational group, not a political group. Such groups are permitted to register voters, under the assumption that democratic participation is a public good. However, there is little question that

Florida Rising has its thumb on the scale for a one-sided political outcome.

This should arguably be problematic for a 501(c)(3) donor such as the Ford Foundation, because according to the IRS, 501(c)(3) groups are prohibited from “voter education or registration activities with evidence of bias that ... have the effect of favoring a candidate or group of candidates.”

Nonetheless, Ford gave Florida Rising more than \$3.7 million in 2022.

At least two other left-biased voter registration groups received funding from Ford in 2022: One Arizona received \$200,000, and Power California was given \$500,000. One Arizona has photos of megaphone-blaring protesters on the main page. A December 2022 Power California social media post claimed the group’s agenda was to “reimagine a world without capitalism.”

The other recent lefty grantee recipients with megaphone militancy pictured on their home pages include Family Values @Work (\$6.5 million since 2022), Re:Power (\$2.8 million), Center for Community Change (\$650,000), Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition (\$350,000), Black Organizing for Leadership and Dignity (\$350,000), and ACCE Institute (\$100,000).

Funding for Politics

In addition to all of the groups mentioned so far, Ford has given an additional \$54 million since 2022 to several dozen other groups and causes involved in motivating and organizing left-wing political activists.

On the main page of its website, the People’s Action Institute asks: “How can we build a multiracial and pluralistic democracy with an inclusive economy to defeat the rise of authoritarianism?” Ford thinks People’s Action has the answer and has given them more than \$6.4 million since September 2022.

According to CNN exit polls, non-white voters accounted for 34 percent of 2020 presidential election voters, up from 29 percent in 2016. The Democratic data firm Catalist found that Joe Biden in 2020 had done slightly better with white voters than 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton (up 3 percentage points), but lost ground with Black voters (down 3 points), Latinos (down 8 points) and Asians (down 1 point). Democrats paying attention are growing concerned that Republicans held onto their new Latino supporters in 2022.

Gerrymandering congressional and state legislatures is one way to bend the arc of democracy to the left.

From 2009 until 2016 the president of the United States was an African American. The United States is by any reasonable definition a very competitive “multiracial democracy,” but the Ford Foundation isn’t convinced.

The Asian American and Pacific Islander Civic Engagement Fund (AAPI Fund), another group claiming to be saving our unthreatened multiracial democracy, is a fiscally sponsored project of the New Venture Fund. AAPI Fund banked more than \$3.9 million from the Ford Foundation in 2022.

The New Venture Fund is one of several nonprofit donor funds managed by Arabella Advisors. Arabella was described in a 2021 profile in *The Atlantic* as a “massive progressive dark-money group,” and in 2020 alone it spent nearly \$1.3 billion on programs and grants.

The Local Progress Policy Institute also lays claim to “fighting for” a multiracial democracy, and has received more than \$2.4 million from Ford since 2022.

In November 2022, Race Forward held a conference on how to save multiracial democracy from what was portrayed as America’s “rapid march towards white authoritarianism.” The group received more than \$1.2 million in grants from Ford during 2022.

In July 2022, Ford gave \$4 million to Bend the Arc, a Jewish left-wing group that claims to be “building the multiracial democracy that’s been promised in America but never achieved.”

Gerrymandering congressional and state legislatures is one way to bend the arc of democracy to the left. Since March 2022, Ford has given at least \$1 million to the New Venture Fund’s Fair Representation in Redistricting project. According to Ford, the grants were to support “education and training for grassroots organizations to increase engagement, transparency and accountability in state redistricting.”

With Arabella loot washing in, these “grassroots” groups were really rich.

Many other lefty nonprofits have received tens of millions from Ford to manufacture movements and train the activists.

Ford gave \$2 million to the Advancement Project Education Fund in July 2022. The purpose, according to the Ford grant description, was “support to build a racially just democracy and support grassroots movements for change.” A logo used by the group features the words “organize,” “protest,” and “vote,” displayed above the images of megaphone and a raised fist. Among its more peculiar left-wing causes, the Advancement Project supports removing police officers from public schools.

The Power Coalition for Equity and Justice is a Louisiana voter mobilization group that opposes voter ID laws and promotes left-leaning economic policies such as increasing the minimum wage. In December 2022, Ford gave the group \$3 million to “engage low-income and communities of color to address policies that perpetuate inequality across Louisiana.”

The Color of Change Education Fund also received more than \$2.6 million from Ford in December 2022. The nonprofit is the issue education arm of Color of Change, a left-wing protest organizer that once claimed a membership of 7 million activists. Color of Change was co-founded in 2005 by Van Jones, who left the group in 2009 to join the Obama administration and later became a CNN commentator.

A May 2023 report in the *Insider* news website, which cited “more than two dozen” current and former Color of Change employees as sources, revealed multiple accusations of sexual harassment and serious mismanagement concerns. In July 2023, Color of Change announced it was imposing heavy budget cuts and layoffs.

Representative examples of other political organizing and pressure groups funded by Ford since 2022 include a \$2.5 million grant to the Rockwood Leadership Institute to “strengthen and network social justice leadership in the United States,” \$1.8 million for the Faith in Action network’s “racial and economic justice organizing,” \$1 million to the New York Foundation’s Youth Organizing Culture Change Fund, \$600,000 for Repairers of the Breach in North Carolina, and \$600,000 to ProGeorgia.

Big Labor, Big Government, Big Censorship

In addition to the nearly \$100 million in grants noted thus far, another \$92.1 million given out by the Ford Foundation since 2022 has specifically funded left-leaning labor, economic, and technology policy nonprofits—or programs that support them.

Today, just 6 percent of all private sector workers and only 2 percent of private food and beverage employees are union members. Private unionization has been veering closer and closer to extinction during the decades since the Ford Foundation’s lefty grant makers began playing with Henry’s money.

But they have been working to bail out Big Labor. Ford has been a huge supporter of “worker centers,” nonprofits that try to behave like labor unions in workplaces where workers haven’t voted for them.

The big winner here, with two grants totaling \$3.3 million since May 2022 was the Restaurant Opportunities Center United (ROC). Since 2006, Ford has funneled almost \$16.3 million to ROC. The National Domestic Workers Alliance is another example. Ford has given \$5 million to the worker center nonprofit since April 2022 and at least \$34.1 million since 2006.

Ford also funds labor policy and advocacy think tanks such as the National Employment Law Project (NELP). Ford grants to NELP since April 2022 have exceeded \$6.7 million.

Another labor-aligned policy and advocacy nonprofit, designed for the construction industry in famously non-union southern states, is the Workers Defense Project. The nonprofit has received more than \$2.3 million from Ford since November 2022.

Other Ford-funded policy and advocacy think tanks purpose-built to bail out the Big Labor agenda include the Jobs with Justice Education Fund, given a grant of \$1.25 million in June 2022 and at least \$19.7 million since 2006; the Economic Policy Institute, recipient of \$1.1 million from Ford since 2022 and almost \$16 million since 2006; and 9to5, National Association of Working Women, given a \$700,000 Ford grant in April 2023.

In addition to nonprofits providing specific support on labor policy, several give general support of the entire left-leaning economic agenda.

Years ago, one of my coworkers at a different employer accurately and waggishly re-christened the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP) as the “Center on Bigger Budget Priorities.” Ford has given CBPP \$8.4 million since July 2022 and almost \$51.8 million since 2006.

The Institute for Policy Studies, one of the oldest lefty think tanks, has received \$1.1 million since 2022. The New America Foundation, a newer think tank providing broad

based research support across a wide range of left-leaning policy priorities, received \$5 million from Ford in 2022 and \$39.2 million since 2006.

The Center for American Progress, historically known as an employment parking space for Bill and Hillary Clinton allies awaiting a return to power, has received \$1.2 million in Ford funding since July 2022 and \$24.6 million since 2006.

Ford has also funded local broad-based left-leaning policy groups. Examples include Every Texan (recipient of \$870,000 from Ford since 2022), the Florida Policy Institute (\$680,000), the Michigan League for Public Policy (\$460,000), and the Louisiana Budget Project (\$375,000).

The Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT) is a left-leaning economic and technology policy think tank that supported “net neutrality” restrictions after they were abolished by the Trump administration. CDT has received at least \$2.3 million from Ford since 2022.

The aforementioned New Venture Fund received nearly \$10 million in technology-identified grants from Ford in 2022.

In another specific example of left-leaning technology policy grants, Ford gave \$200,000 to the Check My Ads Institute in October 2022 for “research and education to hold the digital advertising industry accountable for the spread of harmful content.” Joan Donovan, one of the group’s four board members and a supposed expert at spotting “misinformation” online, supported suppression of the *New York*

Post’s October 2020 report on the controversial contents of Hunter Biden’s discarded laptop, calling suppression of the story “an instructive case study” regarding how to “mitigate media manipulation campaigns.” The laptop story was later shown to be authentic information, rather than misinformation.

Similarly, Free Press, another tech nonprofit dubiously promoting its expertise in finding and suppressing online “disinformation,” received \$5.2 million from Ford in March 2022. In October 2020, Free Press was part of the chorus of fools claiming the Hunter Biden laptop revelations were “foreign disinformation” and cheering on social media firms such as Twitter that were suppressing the story.

Money for Media and Climate Alarmism

Influencing the content of all the media we consume has been the purpose of at least \$14.3 million in Ford grants given since 2022.

According to a grant description provided by Ford, a \$400,000 donation given to the University of Southern California was sent to support the “Charlotta Bass Journalism and Justice Lab which trains anti-racist journalists.” The phrase is from the mission statement of the Charlotta Bass program, which identifies their plan to “train the next generation of antiracist journalists.”

The meaning is left vague in both cases. A positive interpretation is that USC professors believe they have the special sauce to crank out reporters purpose-built to confront racism. The more unpleasant implication is that Ford Foundation staffers believe America is so profoundly racist that special funding is needed just to keep KKK donors off the CNN anchor desk.

It’s difficult to totally dismiss the uglier version, at least from Ford’s perspective, because the same grant officers were simultaneously forking over tens of millions of dollars just to support protest groups who seek to destroy capitalism because they believe it will save the supposedly endangered (or even nonexistent) multiracial democracy.

Everything Ford does can and probably should be understood from the perspective of well-paid would-be revolutionaries who sit atop a \$16 billion mountain of money and believe most Americans are irredeemably awful. With that in mind, consider \$5 million in media grants given to the lefty Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors since October 2022. According to Ford staffers, the loot was meant to support



Joan Donovan, My Ads Institute board member, supported suppression of the New York Post’s October 2020 report on the controversial contents of Hunter Biden’s discarded laptop, calling suppression of the story “an instructive case study” regarding how to “mitigate media manipulation campaigns.”

Credit: Business Insider. License: <https://bit.ly/3YnsRWZ>



Examples of Guardian.org project names include “Broken Capitalism,” “Feminist Economics, Genderqueer Generation, and the State of Men,” and “Climate Crimes.”

building a “bridge to a new paradigm of journalism by improving the health of media ecosystems and promoting equality, social justice, and civic participation.”

That word salad is easier to choke down if replaced by the known agenda of other Ford grantees. It’s a safe bet that a Latino-American entrepreneur who grew rich from capitalism, and maybe even votes Republican sometimes, will not make it across that “bridge to a new paradigm.” And a corporate media that ceases to censor whatever news Dr. Fauci or the FBI do not like won’t be one of the remedies from “improving the health of media ecosystems.”

Chalkbeat, a lefty news nonprofit, received \$100,000 from Ford in April 2022 to put on a “Rebuild Local News Summit.” Then in March 2023 a new nonprofit named “Rebuild Local News” received \$190,000. Online News Association received \$450,000 in May 2022 to train journalists. And a total of \$3.2 million has been given since 2022 to fund local news nonprofits in New Orleans, Chicago, “urban central Virginia,” West Virginia, Detroit, and New York.

A news partner of *The Guardian*, the United Kingdom tabloid, Guardian.org Foundation received \$450,000 from Ford in 2022 to produce American news coverage. Examples of Guardian.org project names include “Broken Capitalism,” “Feminist Economics, Genderqueer Generation, and the State of Men,” and “Climate Crimes.”

Climate alarmism and ESG (environmental, social and governance) programs have collectively received at least \$18 million from Ford since 2022.

More than \$3 million of the total went to Oil Change International to “expose the true costs of fossil fuels and hasten the transition to clean energy.”

Oil Change was one of 715 groups that co-signed a May 2021 letter to the U.S. Senate denouncing nuclear power as a “dirty” form of energy. In truth, nuclear is the largest source of zero-carbon power in the United States, France, and many other advanced nations. It has such functionally unlimited potential for providing more power that former NASA scientist and old guard climate alarmist James Hansen advocates for a massive buildout to replace hydro-

carbon energy. He is joined in this intellectually honest approach to carbon reduction and nuclear power by the Nature Conservancy.

On the other side, Oil Change is one of several hundred nonprofits selling climate alarmism while opposing nuclear energy. This cabal of carbon hypocrites collectively collects more than \$1 billion annually from Ford and many other of the nation’s richest left-wing foundations. Many of the carbon hypocrites—such as the Sunrise Movement, Demos, and the Center for Popular Democracy—have previously been mentioned in this report.

What Ford is getting isn’t carbon reduction, but instead welfare payments and political protection for land-gobbling, weather-dependent wind turbines and solar farms. Ford’s so-called environmentalism is a voracious consumer of the environment.

As You Sow received \$325,000 from Ford in July 2022 to “promote environmental and social corporate responsibility through shareholder advocacy, coalition building, and innovative legal strategies.” ESG is the vehicle used to impose climate alarmism and other leftist policy goals on public corporations and the investments made by state and local governments.

Other examples of Ford ESG grants since 2022 include For The Long Term (more than \$1 million), Majority Action (\$800,000), the Just Capital Foundation (\$750,000), the Bipartisan Policy Center (\$250,000), and \$200,000 each to the Council for Inclusive Capitalism, Chief Executives for Corporate Purpose, and American Affairs Foundation.

Identity Politics and Lawsuits

A large part of the “social” agenda in ESG involves identity politics—programs that encourage Americans to see themselves as socially endangered people because of their race, abortion, immigrant status, or disability. At least \$46.4 million in Ford funding since 2022 has aided nonprofits with this agenda.

The previously mentioned Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors received additional grants of \$5 million for its “Collaborative for Gender and Reproductive Equity”;

\$1.5 million for a “learning community transforming narratives about people of color, immigrants, refugees, Muslims, and indigenous peoples through pop culture”; \$300,000 to “increase the inclusion of Black artists, perspectives, and narratives in U.S. museums and cultural institutions”; and \$50,000 for a “U.S. Summit of Women Philanthropy Leaders.”

The Arabella network’s New Venture Fund received additional grants of \$800,000 for “advocacy, civic engagement and strategic communications to increase and expand access to abortion,” \$750,000 for a “pooled fund to equip LGBTQI, women’s rights and reproductive rights/justice movements to undertake strategic communications and narrative work to counter anti-gender movements,” and \$400,000 for Health Care for America Now to expand its abortion advocacy.

Borealis Philanthropy, another major sponsor of left-wing identity politics projects, received at least \$6.3 million in six grants for five different programs.

Other examples of large Ford grants to promote abortion advocacy and identity politics since 2022 included \$3.9 million to NEO Philanthropy to “strengthen the capacity of the immigrant justice movement,” \$1.6 million to the Groundswell Fund for strengthening of “trans and reproductive justice organizations that are led by women of color, low-income women, and transgender people,” and \$1.6 million for Justice for Migrant Women.

Justice, defined as legal assistance for all of the Ford Foundation’s advocacy agenda or pressure groups to influence the literal selection of justices on federal courts, accounted for at least \$27 million in Ford funding since 2022.

Alliance for Justice, a judicial advocacy group known for its criticism of judicial nominees sponsored by Republican presidents, received \$4 million in December 2022.

The American Civil Liberties Union Foundation (ACLU) has received \$4 million from Ford. In recent years, suppression by federal officials of social media discussions regarding the origin of the COVID virus and the Hunter Biden laptop are just part of an ongoing government war against free expression that is unrivaled since J. Edgar Hoover was alive. The ACLU has mostly sat shamefully on the sidelines in this fight, apparently right where Ford grant officers want it to sit.

The Brennan Center for Justice, another big picture player in left-leaning legal policy advocacy, has received \$1.7 million since 2022. The Asian Law Caucus of Asian Americans

Advancing Justice (AAJ) received \$6.5 million. AAJ is a defender of affirmative action and other identity politics causes. Similarly, the National Women’s Law Center received \$6.8 million.

This Is Who They Are

In August 2022, the Ford staffers approved \$50,000 so the Western States Center could produce “a graphic novel about the January 6th events at the Capitol.” One of the smallest of the \$303 million in leftist grants forked over since 2022, this may be the most representative of what motivates the grant makers in charge of spending Henry Ford’s fortune.

Titled *1/6*, the masthead of the Ford-funded graphic novel asks: “What if the attack on the US Capitol succeeded?”



Titled *1/6*, the masthead of the Ford-funded graphic novel asks: “What if the attack on the US Capitol succeeded?” “The graphic novel chillingly illustrates how close we came to authoritarian rule in America and the threats to our democracy that we still face,” says the promotion on the Western States Center website.

“The graphic novel chillingly illustrates how close we came to authoritarian rule in America and the threats to our democracy that we still face,” says the promotion on the Western States Center website. “Nonprofits and advocacy groups” are instructed where to go to order their free copies.

Well, of course they are. This is a perfect example of the leftist business model that Ford has been financing for more than half a century.

The actual January 6 riot involved a lawless and violent mob briefly occupying and trashing a government building. Riots coinciding with anti-police protests just the year prior resulted in 25 deaths and \$2 billion in damage.

All of these events involved bad people taking advantage of legitimate political protests. None had the slightest, most remote chance in hell of triggering a revolution in the cities where they took place, up to and including the federal capital.

It is dangerously irresponsible to encourage any group of Americans that we are perilously close to a violent revolution to overthrow all they hold dear. It should be obvious that doing so will inspire some in the audience to consider violent means of their own to resist the non-existent threat. Ford and the Western States Center are fomenting the very insurrectionary behavior they claim to be resisting.

The web page of the Center for Popular Democracy, mentioned earlier in this essay as a recent recipient of \$10.6 million from Ford, brags the group has “consistently taken direct action.” As noted earlier, this has included repeated disruptions inside U.S. House and Senate office buildings. In one case, according to a CPD-promoted news report, 128 demonstrators were arrested.

Rough-edged political pressure on federal lawmakers is a tactic that has been used by the Sunrise Movement and other recent recipients of Ford financing. Remember

the megaphones. Ford grantees have a strong affinity for sporting photos of themselves participating in loud street demonstrations.

This is who Ford is and what its grantees represent. And there’s nothing inherently wrong with it. It’s kinder and gentler than tar-and-feathering tax collectors, after all.

But there is nothing remotely like it on the right of center. Few, and possibly zero, pictures of bullhorns or street demonstrations adorn the home pages of grassroots advocacy groups such as Americans for Prosperity. No right-leaning foundations are close to as rich as the Ford Foundation.

Capital Research Center investigations have shown non-profit spending by the left dwarfs the right by more than 3 to 1. The “big” money on the right (such as it is) funds a reliably tame and conventional form of traditional activism that fits nearly all right-of-center people in America.

Ford’s graphic novel portraying “how close we came to authoritarianism” cranks its left-wing audience into believing a complete lie about the nature of their policy rivals. It’s an extreme, but not inconsistent, example of the messages Ford has been funding regarding climate alarmism, claims that capitalism is the fault of racism, the supremacy of identity politics over our common humanity, and all the rest of their lefty rot.

Henry Ford, one of America’s greatest entrepreneurs, was born during the Civil War. A lot has changed since then. It would be entirely understandable if the people spending his money today didn’t adhere exactly to the belief system of a man who was born more than 150 years ago.

What is irresponsible, sometimes dangerously so, is that they can’t fund programs for an America that would be recognizable to someone who was born yesterday. ■

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



BIG MONEY IN DARK SHADOWS

Arabella Advisors' Half-billion-dollar
"Dark Money" Network

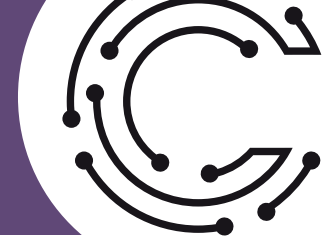
Hayden R. Ludwig

According to media personalities and politicians, nameless, faceless donors wield outsized influence over the American political process due to the so-called "dark money" they use to fund think tanks and advocacy groups. But that's far from the whole story. "Dark money" exists on both sides of the aisle. In fact, the Left seems to have deeper and darker pockets of cash than anyone suspected.

Learn more about liberal "dark money" in CRC's original report.



CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK



LEFT-WING SHAREHOLDERS' PROGRESSIVELY ESG ACTIVISM

By Robert Stilson

Summary: Corporate America's recent leftward lurch on many divisive sociopolitical issues has not occurred in a vacuum. While it doubtlessly has many causes, chief among these is the pressure that businesses face from left-of-center ESG activists, often in the form of shareholder resolutions. Understanding how these resolutions have accelerated both quantitatively and qualitatively goes a long way toward explaining the phenomenon sometimes called "woke capitalism." The good news for those who prefer that companies not continue down this particular path is that as ESG demands have increased, so has the push-back against them.

The pronounced leftward ideological shift that appears to have taken place within corporate America over the past several years doubtlessly has many causes. On the shortlist, however, must be the constant pressure on businesses from left-of-center ESG activists. Those looking to understand how and why certain companies seemingly became "woke" so rapidly should look to how rapidly the activists' demands have accelerated, both quantitatively and qualitatively. One of the best ways to illustrate this is by examining shareholder resolutions.

Understanding ESG Activism

ESG is short for environmental, social, and corporate governance. In the broadest sense, it refers to the consideration of these non-financial factors in corporate operations or evaluations. While few would argue that companies should completely ignore such things, to many observers ESG has become largely synonymous with "woke capitalism"—a term applied to corporate America's pronounced leftward lurch on divisive sociopolitical issues that are often facially unrelated (or indeed, downright harmful) to their core business operations.

It is helpful to conceptualize ESG as consisting of two basic branches: investing and activism. ESG investing refers to making investment decisions based on ESG factors. It is inherently subjective, but not especially problematic so long



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as it is being undertaken by informed and consenting investors. People should be free to invest their own money based on any criteria they like, even at the expense of maximizing financial returns. ESG investing does, however, become a problem when large institutional asset managers (such as public pension funds) engage in it on behalf of beneficiaries who may not approve—or even be aware—of how their money is being invested on the basis of non-pecuniary factors.

ESG activism goes further than this. It refers to efforts intended to harness corporate power to advance often-controversial sociopolitical goals. It is almost always problematic. Today, many ESG activist campaigns scarcely retain even the pretense of furthering shareholder value and have instead largely devolved into a vehicle for (largely left-leaning) political issue advocacy.

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



ESG activism refers to efforts intended to harness corporate power to advance often-controversial sociopolitical goals.

The core objective of ESG activists is to achieve through corporate actions what they are unable to achieve through the traditional democratic political process. ESG activism is therefore in many cases best thought of as a tactic, rather than a distinct issue itself. It is often distinguished more by its target than its substance. Climate activists would like to legislate or regulate against oil and gas, so they target corporate emissions. Abortion activists are furious that *Roe v. Wade* was overturned and that many states have subsequently enacted pro-life laws, so they target corporate policies that they consider to be insufficiently pro-abortion. Race- and ethnicity-focused activists seek to pressure companies into basing more of their decisions on those factors, and so forth.

Like most other forms of activism, ESG activism is incremental (“progressive”) by its very nature. As soon as one goal is achieved, a new more ambitious campaign begins. For many, the long-term goal is to fundamentally reorient the corporate sector away from its traditional function as an instrument of society-wide wealth creation and toward a new role as an instrument for left-progressive social change. This creeping pressure from ESG activists goes a long way toward explaining how and why corporate America has shifted so notably leftward—particularly on social and cultural issues—in recent years.

Sometimes ESG investing and activism overlap, such as when activists also happen to be investors in the targeted company. This classically manifests itself through shareholder resolutions—what author Stephen Soukup has called “the primary tool of the corporate activist.” These are nonbinding proposals submitted by shareholders to corporate leadership, which may ultimately be voted on by other shareholders at the company’s annual meeting. Management will frequently seek to negotiate with the resolution’s proponent before that happens, and the goal of ESG shareholder activists is as much to put pressure on the C-suite and secure favorable concessions as it is to actually win a majority vote at the annual meeting.

Accordingly, shareholder resolutions are an excellent benchmark for understanding the current priorities of ESG activists and how those priorities have shifted over time. Firms like Georgeson provide interesting data and analysis of trends that are evident from each annual proxy season.

ESG activists themselves are also a good source for analyzing resolutions. Most notably this includes the yearly *Proxy Preview* report, which catalogs hundreds of proposals filed primarily by left-of-center interests. Described by the *Chicago Tribune* as the “Bible for socially progressive foundations, religious groups, pension funds, and tax-exempt organizations,” the *Proxy Preview* devotes its pages to listing, categorizing, describing, and analyzing these resolutions from a sympathetic pro-ESG perspective. It is itself one of the best “proxies” for understanding what is currently driving ESG activism on the left.

The *Proxy Preview* is published by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit called As You Sow, which is itself one of the most prominent shareholder activist groups in the country. As of mid-June 2023, As You Sow’s website detailed 683 shareholder proposals “on which *As You Sow* represents investors,” broken down by year, company, initiative, and program. It also provides the operative language from each resolution (the “resolved clause”), which helps illustrate how ESG activists have ramped up their demands of American companies in recent years.

A different online database focused specifically on environmental shareholder resolutions is maintained by another 501(c)(3) nonprofit called Ceres, which coordinates a massive network of more than 220 institutional investors that collectively manage over \$60 trillion in assets. The goal of this network is to “advance sustainable investment practices, engage with corporate leaders, and advocate for key policy and regulatory solutions to accelerate the transition to a just, sustainable, net zero emissions economy.” It is a classic example of how ESG activists coordinate to shoehorn substantive public policy debates into the private corporate sector.

The 2022 *Proxy Preview* noted that the Ceres investor network coordinated most of the climate change shareholder resolutions that were profiled in that year’s report, while in 2021 the network was said to have coordinated “nearly all” of them. Notable members of the Ceres investor network include major asset managers BlackRock and State Street (but not Vanguard); the left-progressive philanthropic foundations such as Park Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Nathan Cummings Foundation, and the Skoll Foundation; activist nonprofits such as As You Sow

and the Sierra Club Foundation; labor unions such as the AFL-CIO and the SEIU; various pension funds; higher education endowments; and the treasurers offices of at least nine states.

An analysis of shareholder resolutions from such sources demonstrates how ESG activism has significantly expanded in recent years, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Quantitative Trends in ESG Resolutions

The recent numerical increase in ESG shareholder resolutions has been well-documented. A comprehensive review of the 2022 proxy season by Georgeson counted 941 shareholder resolutions submitted to Russell 3000 companies, 562 of which went to a vote. This was up significantly from 837 total filed in 2021 and 754 in 2020. As of mid-May, it had counted 951 ESG resolutions filed so far in the 2023 proxy season.

Archived *Proxy Preview* reports dating back to 2015 also illustrate this trend. The total number of resolutions profiled in each report (which uses a mid-February cutoff and thus does not capture resolutions filed later in the year) remained relatively stable at between 370 and 435 proposals filed annually from 2015 through 2021. Resolution counts thereafter increased markedly to 529 in 2022 and 542 in 2023—both all-time records.

Categorizing ESG resolutions is a rather subjective undertaking that can result in the same resolution being classified in different ways, but environmental resolutions were clearly one major driver of this recent growth. Georgeson calculated that such proposals grew by 46 percent from 2021 to 2022, with those that asked companies about greenhouse gas emission reduction targets being the most common type in both years. Similarly, the share of resolutions categorized in the *Proxy Preview* as related to climate change increased from 15 percent in 2021 (the third-largest category), to 21 percent in 2022 and 23 percent in 2023—making it the largest single topic in both years.

Of course, environmental proposals of all varieties have long been a major focus for ESG activists, and there are certain perennial targets. As of June 2023, the database maintained by the climate change-focused Ceres network contained 2,260 such resolutions dating back to 2009. It listed a total of 1,550 climate-related resolutions filed with hundreds of different companies since 2015, but 179 of these proposals were filed at just four corporations: Amazon, Chevron, Dominion Energy, and ExxonMobil. Just six proponents—As You Sow, the comptroller's offices of New York State



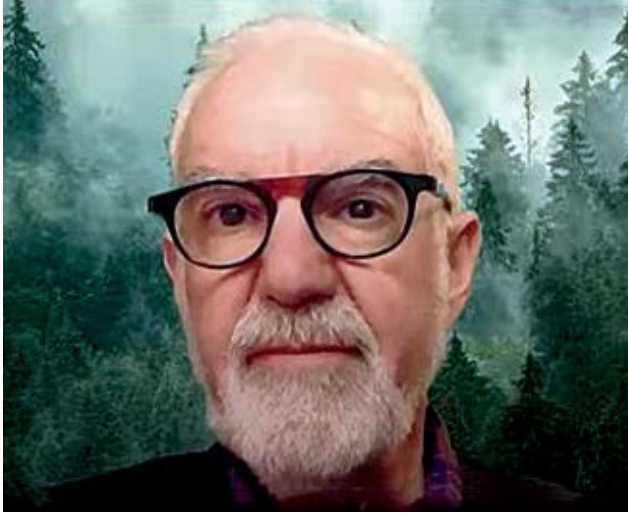
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Georgeson calculated that such proposals grew by 46 percent from 2021 to 2022, with those that asked companies about greenhouse gas emission reduction targets being the most common type in both years.

and New York City, and the ESG asset managers Green Century Capital Management, Trillium Asset Management, and Boston Trust Walden—filed over 43 percent of the climate-related shareholder resolutions listed in the Ceres database since 2015. As You Sow alone accounted for 274 of them.

ESG activist groups have themselves grown substantially over this same period. In its 2014–2015 fiscal year, Ceres reported total revenue of under \$10.5 million, while its most recent tax filings for the 2020–2021 fiscal year disclosed almost \$44.5 million in total revenue. Major funders of Ceres include the MacArthur Foundation (\$15 million awarded from 2017 to 2023), the New Venture Fund (almost \$7.3 million from 2017 to 2021), and the ClimateWorks Foundation (almost \$4.4 million from 2018 to 2021). The Gordon E. and Betty I. Moore Foundation awarded Ceres three multi-year grants worth almost \$9 million from 2016 to 2018. In June 2017 the Ceres investor network counted 133 members, while by June 2023 this had grown to 220.

As You Sow's growth and expansion as a proponent of ESG shareholder resolutions has likewise been marked. The annual number of shareholder resolutions listed on its website grew from just eight in 2010 to over a hundred in 2023. From 2010 to 2021 (the most recent year for which information is available), As You Sow's revenue also grew from about \$1.27 million to almost \$6 million, and it reported having raised over \$12.7 million in 2020. Recently,



Credit: CODEPINK. License: <https://bit.ly/3Y8xVc>.

(Andrew Behar, CEO of As You Sow) As of mid-June 2023, As You Sow’s website detailed 683 shareholder proposals “on which As You Sow represents investors,” broken down by year, company, initiative, and program.

some of its most important organizational funders have been the giant philanthropic foundations founded by liberal billionaire George Soros, whose Open Society Foundations and Foundation to Promote Open Society have combined to grant As You Sow at least \$1.7 million since 2020.

While As You Sow has filed at least one shareholder resolution with approximately 270 different companies since 2010, just 24 of these accounted for more than one-third of the resolutions it submitted over that period. It filed 15 percent of its resolutions at a mere seven corporations: ExxonMobil, Chevron, Kroger, McDonald’s, Amazon, Ameren, and Southern Company. Since 2010, As You Sow has filed a combined 47 different shareholder resolutions with ExxonMobil and Chevron alone.

These are unsurprising corporate targets, given that until recently As You Sow focused primarily on environmental issues. Of the 683 resolutions that it filed from 2010 through mid-June 2023, it classified 296 (over 43 percent) under its energy program, 120 (about 17.5 percent) under its circular economy/waste program, and 77 (11 percent) under its environmental health program. While it has submitted 122 total resolutions under its social program (almost 18 percent), all of these have been filed since 2019. Social resolutions accounted for between 35 and 40 percent of all proposals submitted by As You Sow from 2021 through 2023, and the large majority of these were classified as relating to either “diversity and gender equality,” “racial justice, or “sexual and reproductive health.”

This tracks with larger observed ESG trends. The 2022 *Proxy Preview* noted that the number of “racial justice” proposals continued to grow significantly that year, having more than doubled from 2021 after being practically non-existent prior to that. This was largely a consequence of the 2020 Black Lives Matter protest movement. The Supreme Court’s 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* led to a spike in the number of resolutions related to abortion in 2023, which further illustrates just how closely ESG activism is linked to the country’s latest political debates. Indeed, corporate political activity itself has long been a major target for ESG shareholder activists, ranging from 17 to 26 percent of all resolutions profiled in the *Proxy Preview* each year from 2015 through 2023.

Qualitative Trends in ESG Resolutions

Perhaps even more interesting is how the nature of ESG shareholder resolutions—what they specifically ask companies to do—has shifted over the years to rapidly ramp up the pressure on American business. To quote the publisher’s introduction to the 2021 *Proxy Preview*, “shareholders are organizing as never before to vote against boards that will not adopt a climate transition plan; disclose diversity, equity, inclusion and racial justice metrics; adopt policies to eradicate systemic racism; and implement the tenets of stakeholder capitalism that they have all pledged to uphold.” That is quite an expansive role for the electorally unaccountable leadership of corporate America to play in our country’s politics and society.

The accelerating demands of ESG activists have even caused some of their traditional allies to waver. In May 2023 the *Wall Street Journal* editorial board featured a report from the Committee to Unleash Prosperity, which observed (among many other things) that BlackRock—the world’s largest asset manager and widely perceived to be a driving force in the pro-ESG trend—had “begun to retreat from its ESG advocacy on proxy voting as shareholder proposals have become more extreme.” In 2022, BlackRock expressed its reservations that the latest environmental proposals had become “more prescriptive or constraining on companies and may not promote long-term shareholder value.” In other words, ESG activists had finally started pushing things too far even for ESG-friendly BlackRock.

Climate change resolutions have become especially aggressive. Remarking on the 2022 proxy season, Georgeson noted that “while shareholder proposals related to greenhouse gas



The accelerating demands of ESG activists have even caused some of their traditional allies to waver.

(GHG) emissions reduction targets of a more general nature were filed in the 2021 season, the majority filed in 2022 explicitly sought targets across Scopes 1, 2 and 3 emissions.” Scope 3 emissions are those not controlled by the company itself, but indirectly related to its operations. Georgeson calculated that at least 55 of the 75 resolutions related to emissions reductions included Scope 3 in their proposals.

The issue of oil and gas financing provides another illustration. As of June 2023, the Ceres database identified 102 total climate change shareholder resolutions that had been filed with banks since 2009, but 47 percent of those were submitted in just the past two years. They have also become dramatically more demanding. In 2009 Citigroup received a resolution asking the company “to cease all financing of [mountain top removal] coal mining.” In 2021, the bank was asked “if and how it intends to reduce the [greenhouse gas] emissions associated with its financing activities” in order to align with the Paris Agreement. By 2022 it was being asked to adopt a policy “to ensure that the company’s lending and underwriting do not contribute to new fossil fuel supplies inconsistent with fulfilling ... credible net zero commitments,” and in 2023, a resolution from Harrington Investments simply went ahead and asked Citigroup to adopt “a time bound phase out” of lending and underwriting

to new oil and gas projects. Georgeson noted that 10 different companies had received proposals in 2022 asking them to stop financing or underwriting such projects.

This acceleration is evident in other topics as well. Largely precipitated by the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, the 2021 *Proxy Preview* not only detailed a major spike in the number of resolutions asking for various diversity disclosures from companies, but also some substantively new proposals seeking reports “on how racism affects companies and how they plan to combat it”—including through commissioning third-party racial justice/racial equity audits of themselves. Georgeson commented that year on how companies were suddenly finding “themselves on the hot seat ... to match their words with actions.”

Indeed, the erstwhile environmentally focused As You Sow launched a Racial Justice Initiative in order to “end corporate complicity in systemic racism” and promote an “antiracist perspective” at American companies. The initiative features a “racial justice scorecard” used to evaluate companies based on 27 different criteria. Heavy weight is given to factors like whether the company has undergone a third-party racial justice audit or made certain “racial justice donations,” as well as whether it had released diversity data on employee recruitment, retention, and promotion. Less weighty, but still relevant to a company’s final score, are things like whether it had used the words “Black Lives Matter” and specifically named “victims of police violence” in official statements and whether the company had acknowledged the existence of “systemic racism” and proceeded to identify itself as an “antiracist” company. According to the *Proxy Preview*, some shareholder resolutions have subsequently featured As You Sow’s scorecard in their proposals.

One of the best ways to illustrate how ESG shareholder resolutions have become more demanding over the past few years is to look at those that were filed by the same proponent with the same company on the same or similar topics. As You Sow is an excellent candidate for such an examination due to its longtime status as a prominent ESG shareholder activist group, its role in publishing the *Proxy Preview*, and the fact that it makes detailed information about its resolutions easily accessible on its website.



Credit: Andrew Dykes. License: <https://bit.ly/46VMzae>.

By 2022, Citibank was being asked to adopt a policy “to ensure that the company’s lending and underwriting do not contribute to new fossil fuel supplies inconsistent with fulfilling ... credible net zero commitments.”

Consider those it has filed with the major electric utility Dominion Energy. In 2011, As You Sow submitted a resolution asking the company to report on any financial risks related to its use of coal. By 2016, it was asking Dominion to report on company plans to reduce its total carbon emissions and to address “potential future threats and opportunities presented by climate change driven technology changes.” As You Sow’s 2021 submission asked Dominion to report on ways in which it could encourage “electrification of the built environment” in order to combat climate change and further its “transition toward enterprise-wide alignment with the Paris Climate Agreement.” The following year, it dispensed with the report request and simply asked Dominion to “revise its net zero by 2050 target” to include Scope 3 emissions or explain why it wouldn’t do so.

A similar pattern played out at Duke Energy. In 2011, As You Sow asked the company to report on any possible financial risks related to its continued use of coal for power generation. In 2017, the request was for a report “assessing the public health impacts of its coal use,” and by 2019, As You Sow was asking “how [Duke] will mitigate” the public health risks it was purportedly causing. Its 2021 resolution requested an annual report on Duke’s upstream supply chain emissions, while its 2022 resolution directly asked the company to “revise its net zero by 2050 target” to include all Scope 3 emissions. That is quite a shift in 10 years.

In 2013, As You Sow asked Amazon to “explore ways it can provide its customers with take-back of used electronics”—essentially a recycling service. Its 2017 resolution requested a report on any environmental impacts resulting



In 2023, As You Sow asked “how [Bank of America] intends to align its financing activities with its 2030 sectoral greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets,” including the specific actions it would take, the reductions that would purportedly be achieved, and the timeline for doing so.

from Amazon’s use of foam packaging, but by 2021 a similar resolution had expanded to encompass all “plastic packaging attributable to all Amazon operations,” beginning with the source materials used in plastic manufacturing and continuing “through disposal or recycling.” The next year, it went ahead and asked the company to report on how it could reduce its use of plastics by a full third—a resolution that received 48.9 percent support from Amazon shareholders.

Finally, consider the trajectory of As You Sow’s engagements with Bank of America. In 2011 and 2012, it was simply encouraging the bank to stop using a certain chemical in its receipt paper. By 2020, it was submitting a resolution asking for a report on “risks associated with maintaining its current levels of carbon-intensive lending.” A resolution the following year requested a report on “if and how [Bank of America] intends to reduce the [greenhouse gas] emissions associated with its financing activities” to align with the Paris Agreement. The word “if” was dropped by 2023, when As You Sow simply asked “how [Bank of America] intends to align its financing activities with its 2030 sectoral greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets,” including the specific actions it would take, the reductions that would purportedly be achieved, and the timeline for doing so.

Pushing and Pushback

The quantitative and qualitative acceleration of ESG shareholder resolutions is easier to understand when one recalls that ESG activism is just ordinary sociopolitical issue activism undertaken within the corporate sector. It is subject to the same tendency toward maximalist objectives, pursued incrementally, and limited only by the willingness of those targeted to accede to whatever demands are currently being made. In traditional activism, this generally means the voters and their elected representatives. In ESG activism, this generally means institutional shareholders and corporate leadership.

Occasionally, ESG activists tip their hand on this point. In explaining the foundation’s 2023 decision to file shareholder resolutions at companies like Disney and UnitedHealth Group targeting their past election-related expenditures, the executive director of the Educational Foundation of America said that the goal was to pressure them into “reconsider[ing] their contributions to politicians harming their employees through enacting abortion bans.” That is a political objective, plain and simple.

This is not to say that ESG activists don’t hold long-term goals for the corporation itself. In 2021, a nonprofit called the Shareholder Commons filed a series of resolutions at

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Some activist groups have promoted congressional legislation that would establish a federal chartering system for corporations, requiring them to operate for public benefit purposes.

companies such as BlackRock, Alphabet (Google), and Amazon asking them to become public benefit corporations. This would legally permit them to pursue broad social objectives through their operations, even at the expense of generating shareholder value. Although those resolutions attracted scant support from shareholders, other activist groups have promoted long-shot congressional legislation that would establish a federal chartering system for corporations, requiring them to operate for public benefit purposes.

The good news for those who would prefer that corporate America not continue down this particular path is the increasing pushback against ESG investing and activism. And the pushback appears to be having an effect. Late in 2022, major asset manager Vanguard withdrew from the Net Zero Asset Managers initiative and is also apparently no longer a member of the Ceres investor network, having been listed on the latter's website as recently as May 2023.

While ESG shareholder resolutions remain dominated by left-leaning interests, the proportion filed from the right has been growing—from a low of 3 percent in 2016–2017 to 8 percent in 2023, according to past *Proxy Preview* reports. Many of these have been submitted by the National Center for Public Policy Research, which also publishes an annual *Proxy Navigator* voting guide to serve as an alternative to the pro-ESG *Proxy Preview*. Indeed, in 2023 the *Proxy Preview* changed its longstanding category name for right-of-center shareholder resolutions from “conservative” to “anti-ESG,”

appearing to implicitly concede that in practice “ESG” is synonymous with liberal-left ideological objectives.

In June 2023, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote of how this pushback had evidently caused many U.S.-listed companies to become distinctly less inclined to tout their ESG initiatives compared to previous years. The paper pointed to data showing that the phrases “environmental, social and governance,” “ESG,” “diversity, equity and inclusion,” “DEI” and “sustainability” were mentioned on 575 earnings calls from April 1 to June 5, representing a 31 percent decline from 2022. While this may represent more of a messaging shift than a substantive one, at least for the time being, it is nonetheless notable.

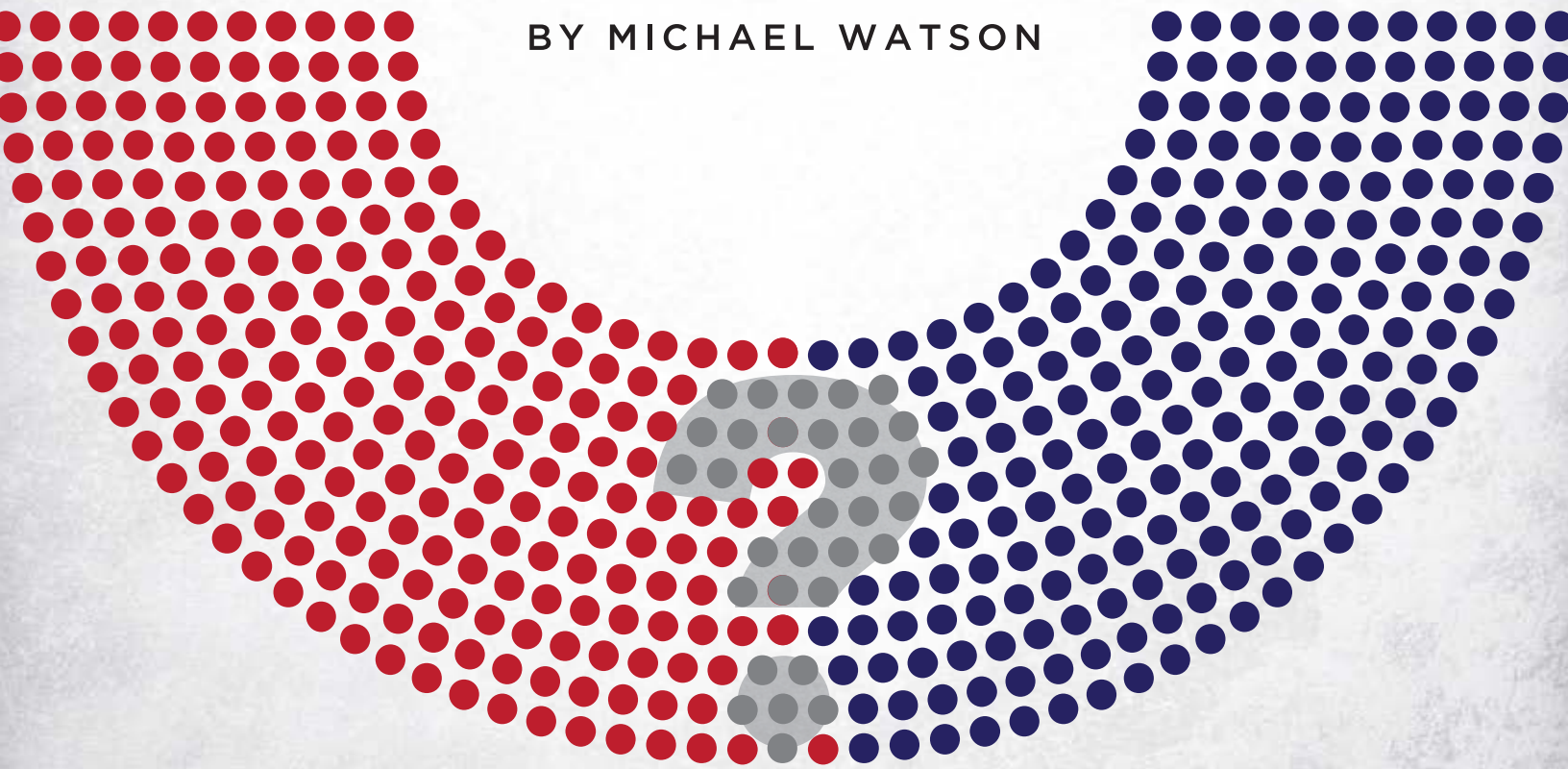
There is a natural tendency in business to gravitate toward the path of least resistance in ESG matters—an inclination that to date has been heavily influenced by the disproportionate pressure coming from the ideological Left. Only when companies perceive the costs of their controversial ESG initiatives to clearly outweigh the benefits—whether because activists pushed things too far, the pushback became too intense, or perhaps most likely a combination of both—will those activists cease to make further “progress” within corporate America. ■

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

THE MYTH OF NON-PARTISAN DISTRICTS:

AN EXPERIMENT IN REDISTRICTING REFORM

BY MICHAEL WATSON



CAPITAL RESEARCH CENTER
AMERICA'S INVESTIGATIVE THINK TANK



TAMMANY HALL 2.0: THE LEFT'S NEW POLITICAL MACHINE

By Fred Lucas

Summary: *Activist groups on the Left enjoy using the term “Jim Crow 2.0” to describe almost any election integrity measure, such as voter ID. Under cover of this phony narrative, these well-financed organizations are teaming up with the government to make up what should quite accurately be called Tammany Hall 2.0. In the late 19th century, progressive reformers fought Tammany Hall and other powerful political machines. Today, self-styled progressives are part of Tammany Hall 2.0. Like in the past, the objective is to winning elections by any means necessary.*

Activist groups on the Left enjoy using the term “Jim Crow 2.0” to describe almost any election integrity measure, such as voter ID. Even President Joe Biden joined in when delivering some of his most fiery speeches in the lead-up to the 2022 midterm elections.

The absurdity of comparing voter ID to Jim Crow, which represented 100 years of Southern States imposing blatantly racist and unconstitutional laws should speak for itself. Jim Crow 2.0 is a phony narrative, as these politicians and pressure groups on the Left used “voter suppression” for sloganeering but haven’t produced evidence of it happening in modern times.

As explained in my book, *The Myth of Voter Suppression: The Left’s Assault on Clean Elections*, it takes big money to spread a big lie. Under the Biden administration, these well-financed organizations are teaming up with the government to make up what should quite accurately be called Tammany Hall 2.0. Tammany Hall was the powerful New York Democrat political machine, originally co-founded by Aaron Burr, that had national reach in the party well into the 20th century.

Organizations financed by the likes of George Soros and Arabella Advisors among others fight needed election reforms today by wrapping themselves in a flag of social justice arguments. Quite similarly, the original Tammany Hall and other big city machines often cast themselves as the defender of the working men, insisting that measures such as voter registration and the secret ballot were too harsh for low-income or illiterate voters.



Credit: Thomas Nast. License: <https://bit.ly/3O6hg2->

Tammany Hall was the powerful New York Democrat political machine, originally co-founded by Aaron Burr, that had national reach in the party well into the 20th century.

One thing, the real Jim Crow era in the agrarian South, had in common with Tammany Hall and the other political machines concentrated in industrial big cities was that each focused heavily on warping election laws to ensure Democrats would win elections and stay in power.

A significant difference is that in the late 19th century, progressive reformers fought the powerful machines. Today, self-styled progressives are part of Tammany Hall 2.0.

More than 20 states passed election reforms in 2021. The reforms varied, but they generally expanded voter ID to mail-in voting, restricted ballot harvesting, and cleaned up voter registration rolls of dead or out-of-towners. Lying about these state laws was a necessary pretext for Tammany Hall 2.0 to attempt to pass the federal election takeover bills that would erase most safeguards. But when even a

*Fred Lucas, author of *The Myth of Voter Suppression: The Left’s Assault on Clean Elections* (Post Hill Press) is manager of the Investigative Reporting Project at The Daily Signal.*

Democrat-controlled Senate couldn't ram through a federal election takeover, Biden had an executive order to fall back on.

Much like Tammany Hall, which reigned for nearly two centuries winning elections by any means necessary, today's arguments and goals are remarkably the same, even if the language, framing, and selling points are altered. The political machines of the past pushed for immigration mills for signing up voters, immediately enfranchising the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated, and, of course, smearing every reform from the secret ballot and requiring voter registration, and today voter ID.

Also, keep in mind, Tammany, the Pendergast machine in Missouri, the Daley machine in Chicago, and other machines across the country stayed in power largely by tying government force to political campaigns and linking social services and government jobs with votes.

Federal power partnering with politicized groups to sway elections lacks the shock value of the FBI spying on parents at school board meetings or IRS agents showing up at the home of a journalist critical of the Biden administration. But this is every bit as much of a problem of weaponizing the federal government.

Demos: "Act as Voter Registration Agencies"

By themselves, one can dismiss various disparate nonprofits operating with a common goal. What makes it much more like a nationalized Tammany Hall was President Biden signing Executive Order 14019 "Promoting Access to Voting" in March 2021. It sounds harmless, even noble.

The Biden executive order calls for "soliciting and facilitating approved, nonpartisan third-party organizations and state officials to provide voter registration services on agency premises."

Don't worry. It's nonpartisan. The fact is the bulk of nonprofit organizations—save for political action committees—are legally nonpartisan, meaning they don't endorse or contribute to political candidates. However, many of these same organizations are not nonpolitical, instead involving themselves in advancing certain policies on the Right and the Left.

For two years, federal agencies kept it secret from inquiring members of Congress and watchdog groups about which organizations were partners in Biden's federal-sponsored get-out-the-vote effort. The Justice Department claimed

in litigation last fall that releasing its strategic plan would create "public confusion."

Finally, in June, the Indian Health Service admitted it was working with the highly politicized American Civil Liberties Union and the dark-money group Demos, as well as Native American advocacy organizations to implement Biden's executive order.

One should expect Demos to be involved. The New York City-based liberal think tank wrote the draft for the executive order on December 3, 2020, in a report titled "Executive Action to Advance Democracy: What the Biden-Harris Administration and the Agencies Can Do to Build a More Inclusive Democracy."

The first of the six recommendations says, "The Biden-Harris administration can make voting more accessible by directing specified federal agencies, in their administration of federal programs, to act as voter registration agencies."

By March 2021, Biden's executive order read, "Agencies shall consider ways to expand citizens' opportunities to register to vote and to obtain information about, and participate in, the electoral process."

Importantly, when Demos made the voting recommendations to the incoming Biden administration, K. Sabeel Rahman was the president of Demos and Chiraag Bains was the Demos legal strategies director. In early 2021, Biden appointed Rahman and Bains as top-level White House



When Demos made the voting recommendations to the incoming Biden administration, K. Sabeel Rahman was the president of Demos. In early 2021, Biden appointed Rahman as a top-level White House adviser.

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*Demos uses brazen phrases like “transforming America,”
“rethinking capitalism,” and “global governance.”*

advisers. Rahman became senior counsel for the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, which oversees regulation, and Bains became the deputy director of racial justice and equity for the Domestic Policy Council. The executive order identifies the Domestic Policy Council as taking the lead on the voting policy.

In April 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Bains co-wrote a piece on the Demos website that said any criticism of expanded mail-in-voting would be an attempt at voter suppression.

In April 2021, Biden named Justin Levitt, a former Demos lawyer, as his senior policy advisor for democracy and voting rights.

While other groups on the Left often attempt to sound reasonable and pragmatic, Demos is more brazen and uses phrases like “transforming America,” “rethinking capitalism,” and “global governance.” Demos’s Democracy Program strikes one of its least-threatening tones. Don’t be fooled. It’s about weaponizing the federal government to sign up as many Democrat voters as possible.

The Center for Public Integrity classifies Demos as a “dark money” group since it doesn’t disclose its donors. The Democracy Alliance, a consortium of progressive donors, lists Demos as a “recommended organization” and previously listed Demos as a “2020 Vision Investment Portfolio.”

Still, in past years Demos has listed some of its funders, while other organizations have touted grants to the left-wing group. Records show the Tides Foundation contributed more than \$1 million to Demos over the years. The Ford Foundation gave more than \$1 million, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation gave at least \$850,000 to Demos.

Over several years, W.K. Kellogg Foundation gave about \$470,000, the Surdna Foundation gave about \$370,000, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund gave \$268,000, and the Rockefeller Family Fund gave about \$190,000.

Demos has frequently pushed the “voter suppression” lie. The group published a March 2017 piece on its website trying to explain away President Donald Trump’s 2016 victory with an article titled, “Voter Suppression Works,” relying on a discredited report by the left-wing Priorities USA and Civic Analytics. The report claimed Wisconsin’s

voter ID law depressed turnout by 200,000 votes. Those findings were ruled “mostly false” by PolitiFact, a left-leaning outlet.

Priorities USA: ‘We’ve Got the Answers’

Priorities USA has tried to help provide ammunition for the Left’s fake narratives. Whether organizations are formally partnering with the Biden administration to implement the order is less important than whether a group is aiding the effort by providing the rhetoric and money to stop clean election reforms.

Former Obama White House staffers Bill Burton and Sean Sweeney launched Priorities USA, a Democrat PAC, after the 2010 midterm elections. The group spent \$66 million in the 2012 election cycle and \$117 million in 2016 with backing from big donors on the left such as Soros, Fred Eychaner, Donald Sussman, and James Simons, who contributed millions.

During the 2022 election cycle, AFT Solidarity, affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, contributed more than \$400,000 to Priorities USA, according to OpenSecrets.org. Jay Robert Pritzker of the Pritzker Group gave \$200,000. The NARAL Freedom Fund, an abortion advocacy group, gave \$100,000.

In the lead up to the 2022 election, Priorities USA launched a campaign claiming voter suppression—spending \$10 million on litigation and \$5 million on digital ads. The campaign used a somewhat condescending jingle in the ads, “It’s almost time to vote, but if you don’t know what to do, we’ve got the answers for you.”

The group intervened in existing election litigation in Michigan, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania last year. It also initiated lawsuits in Arizona, Georgia, New Hampshire, and Nevada that challenged rules on ballot drop boxes, ballot harvesting, voter ID and signature-match requirements, and the maintenance of accurate voter registration lists.

Priorities USA thought it found a bona fide sob story in 2021. The party of the downtrodden choice for a victim was a Yale graduate student. The litigation was against limits on ballot harvesting in the 2021

Florida voting law, claiming the student couldn't just mail a ballot himself instead of handing it off to a ballot harvester.

Asked in a deposition why returning a ballot to Florida was an undue burden, he explained the nearest post office was 30 minutes from his home. When asked if he ever Googled a post office closer to his home, he answered in the negative. It turned out the Yale student wasn't aware he could use the mailbox at his apartment and that there were also public mailboxes six blocks away from his apartment. Shortly after the debacle of a deposition, Priorities USA dropped the case.

Brennan Center: Propagandists for Voter Fraud Deniers

The Brennan Center for Justice is part of the New York University School of Law and has been a reliable propagandist for claiming voter suppression is rampant.

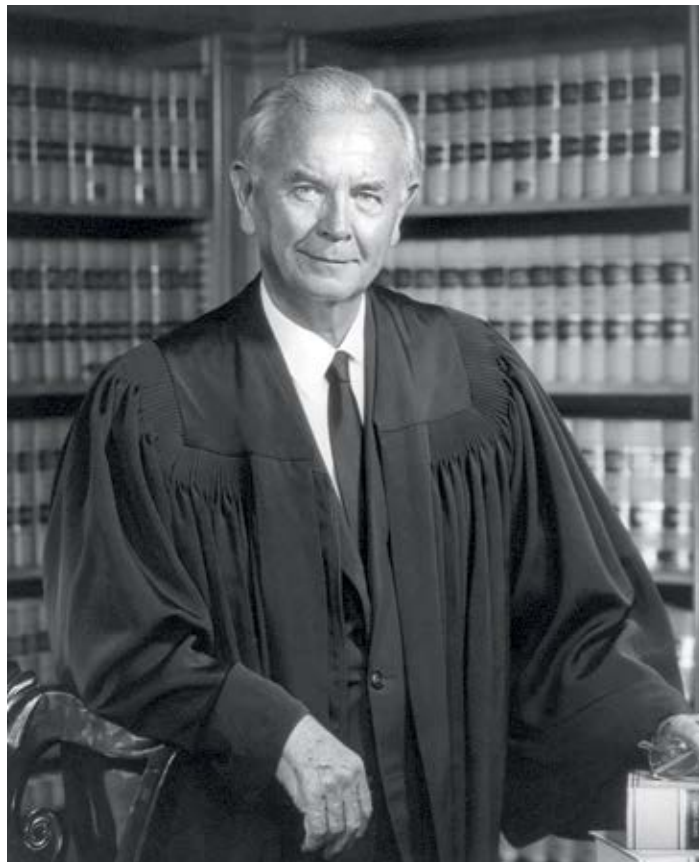
Named for liberal Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, the center was established in 1995 after Brennan's former clerks raised \$5 million to establish what now functions as a mix between an activist organization and a think tank.

Voter fraud deniers often cite a 2007 analysis from the Brennan Center for Justice that claims voter fraud incident rates were between 0.0003 and 0.025 percent between 2000 and 2004. Such an estimate is unrealistically low but largely misses the point either way.

As the 2005 Carter-Baker Commission correctly says, the threat "is not the magnitude of voter fraud." Rather, "in close or disputed elections, and there are many, a small amount of fraud could make the margin of difference." The bipartisan commission, named for co-chairman former Democrat President Jimmy Carter and former Republican Secretary of State James Baker, also called for voter ID across the nation.

That's a policy that the Brennan Center staunchly opposes, even though about 80 percent of Americans across all demographics support ID measures. The affiliation with NYU law school lends credibility to its often outrageous conclusions.

The Brennan Center has its share of major corporate donors. The George Soros-backed Open Societies Foundation gave \$7.4 million to the Brennan Center between 2000 and 2010.



Credit: LOC. License: <https://bit.ly/3OvRTHV>

(Official portrait of U.S. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr.) Established in 1995, the Brennan Center for Justice is part of the New York University School of Law and has been a reliable propagandist for claiming voter suppression is rampant.

From 2002 to 2011, the Tides Foundation gave at least \$2.7 million to the Brennan Center.

The San Francisco-based Tides Foundation was founded in 1976 by political activist Drummond Pike and financed by Jane Lehman, heiress to the fortune generated by the Reynolds tobacco conglomerate. Tides has spent its fortune on Black Lives Matter, Media Matters, Planned Parenthood, Democracy Now, the ACLU, and others.

The Joyce Foundation of Chicago gave more than \$1 million to Brennan. The Joyce Foundation, established in 1948, has been a significant donor to the special interest groups that undermine election integrity. Barack Obama is a former board member. The group also regularly finances advocacy for gun control, leftwing education policy, and backs left-of-center nonprofit media outlets.

Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund has given more than \$2 million to the Brennan Center. The Boston-based nonprofit arm of the financial firm Fidelity Investments is the largest public charity in the United States with \$30 billion in assets.

The Melaleuca Foundation, the charitable arm of the Melaleuca wellness company, gave more than \$900,000, while the Capital One Foundation, gave more than \$10,000 to the Brennan Center.

The largest funder to Brennan has been the Kohlberg Foundation, which has given a dozen grants of more than \$15 million. The Kohlberg Foundation was established by private equity billionaire Jerome Kohlberg in 1989 and gives grants to left-leaning legal advocacy and environmental organizations.

Higher profile donors gave less, but still significant amounts of money to the organization. The Jennifer and Jonathan Allan Soros Foundation gave grants that totaled about \$250,000 to the Brennan Center. The Ford Foundation—a typical donor to the leftwing causes and reoccurring funder to the suppression hysteria complex—gave about \$160,000 to the Brennan Center.

Stacey Abrams and the Fair Fight Network

Lefty wonks like Demos and Brennan could never fire up the Democrat base the way twice-defeated Georgia gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams has after she became the evangelist of voter suppression after never accepting her 2018 defeat. She launched her sore loser status into success and fortune with her Fair Fight network.

She didn't coin the term, but she did popularize the "Jim Crow 2.0" phrase.

Fair Fight Action was founded in 2014, initially known as the Voter Access Institute, but changed the name after Abrams's 2018 loss. With the name change, the organization also changed its bylaws that prohibited it from getting directly or indirectly involved in elections. It was more political now.

Separate from Abrams's Fair Fight Action, a 501(c)(4) group that advocates for policy, she established Fair Fight PAC, which is engaged directly in campaigns.

In 2019, Fair Fight Action sued the state of Georgia, claiming minorities were denied the right to vote during the election she ran in because of "discriminatory voting barriers reminiscent of the Jim Crow era."

CC —————
Stacey Abrams didn't coin the term, but she did popularize the "Jim Crow 2.0" phrase.

The lawsuit didn't try to reverse the outcome of the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election but did call for the state to stop updating voter rolls and to ban touchscreen voting machines. The lawsuit accused the 2018 winner, Gov. Brian Kemp, of using his former position as secretary of state, with oversight of state elections to try to prevent minority voters from casting ballots.

Her organization made entirely unfounded claims in court, as she insisted without evidence the election was stolen. Most major legacy media outlets held Abrams up as a hero, while ripping Donald Trump when he claimed the 2020 election was stolen.

One major parallel for the Abrams and Trump post-election is gripes about Dominion Voting Systems, the voting machine firm that scored a \$700 million settlement in a defamation lawsuit from Fox News.



Stacey Abrams became the evangelist of voter suppression after never accepting her 2018 defeat. She launched her sore loser status into success and fortune with her Fair Fight network.

Credit: Larry Cooper. License: Shutterstock.

Fair Fight Action supported the Coalition for Good Governance that pushed conspiracy theories about Dominion Voting Systems. “Yes, @fairfightaction has been a generous contributor to our litigation. They have been the largest single contributor to date,” CGG Executive Director Marilyn Marks wrote in a tweet on January 27, 2019. “We are proud that Stacey Abrams’s Fair Fight Action organization has been a generous donor to advance our efforts that benefits voters and Fair Fight’s far-reaching voting rights lawsuit as well,” Marks wrote in the report released on February 8, 2019.

Later that year on November 14, Marks thanked Fair Fight Action for their “support” in a tweet. The lawsuit claimed Georgia allowed the use of an unsecure voter registration database. Fair Fight Action called for supporters to “pack the courthouse” for the CCG group in a July 2019 event. The event’s flyer called Dominion voting equipment “unauditable and unconstitutional.”

After Biden formally won the Electoral College vote in December 2020, he said the election process “should be celebrated, not attacked” and denounced “baseless claims about the legitimacy of the results.” The bizarre irony was that the Biden transition team included Jose Morales, the deputy director for voter protection at Fair Fight Action. In January 2022, two years into his presidency, Biden appointed Abrams confidante Dara Lindenbaum to the Federal Election Commission.

Lindenbaum represented Fair Fight Action in a late 2018 federal lawsuit against the state of Georgia, where she signed onto a complaint filled with unproven allegations, including a claim that “one troubling problem—encountered by several voters—is that voting machines switched their votes from Leader Stacey Abrams to Secretary Kemp.”

Donors to the Fair Fight PAC include former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who contributed \$5 million in October 2019, clearly a time when he wanted to curry favor for his late entry into the Democratic presidential primary field for 2020. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)—who has verbally bought into the Abrams Big Lie about the 2018 election and also ran in 2020—gave the group \$10,000.

Big Labor also did its part to back Fair Fight PAC. The United Auto Workers, Communications Workers of America, the National Education Association, and AFSCME each contributed \$1 million during the 2020 election cycle. The AFL-CIO contributed \$500,000 to Fair Fight PAC.

Stacy Schusterman, former Samson Energy CEO, and head of another group called the Freedom to Vote Alliance that popped up in 2022, gave \$495,000 to Fair Fight PAC in 2020.

Among the largest donors to the Fair Fight PAC is California progressive activist Karla Jurvetson, who gave about \$1 million. During the 2022 election cycle, former Google CEO Eric Schmidt donated \$395,000 to Fair Fight PAC, Democrat donor Deborah Simon contributed \$245,000 to the Abrams group, and Jeffrey Katzenberg of DreamWorks contributed \$95,000 among other key donors, according to OpenSecrets.

Fair Fight Action’s biggest donor by far is Fair Fight PAC, which has given \$16.3 million. The group Defeat by Tweet contributed \$192,381 to Fair Fight Action. The Tides Foundation gave at least \$50,000 to Fair Fight Action.

Notably, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation gave \$40,000 to Fair Fight Action. Created in 2006 and based in Mountain View, California, the foundation has more than \$11 billion in assets and spends mostly on progressive groups. It has funded the Center for Tech and Civic Life, which played a pivotal role in the 2020 election by funneling money from the Mark Zuckerberg to get-out-the-vote efforts in 2020.

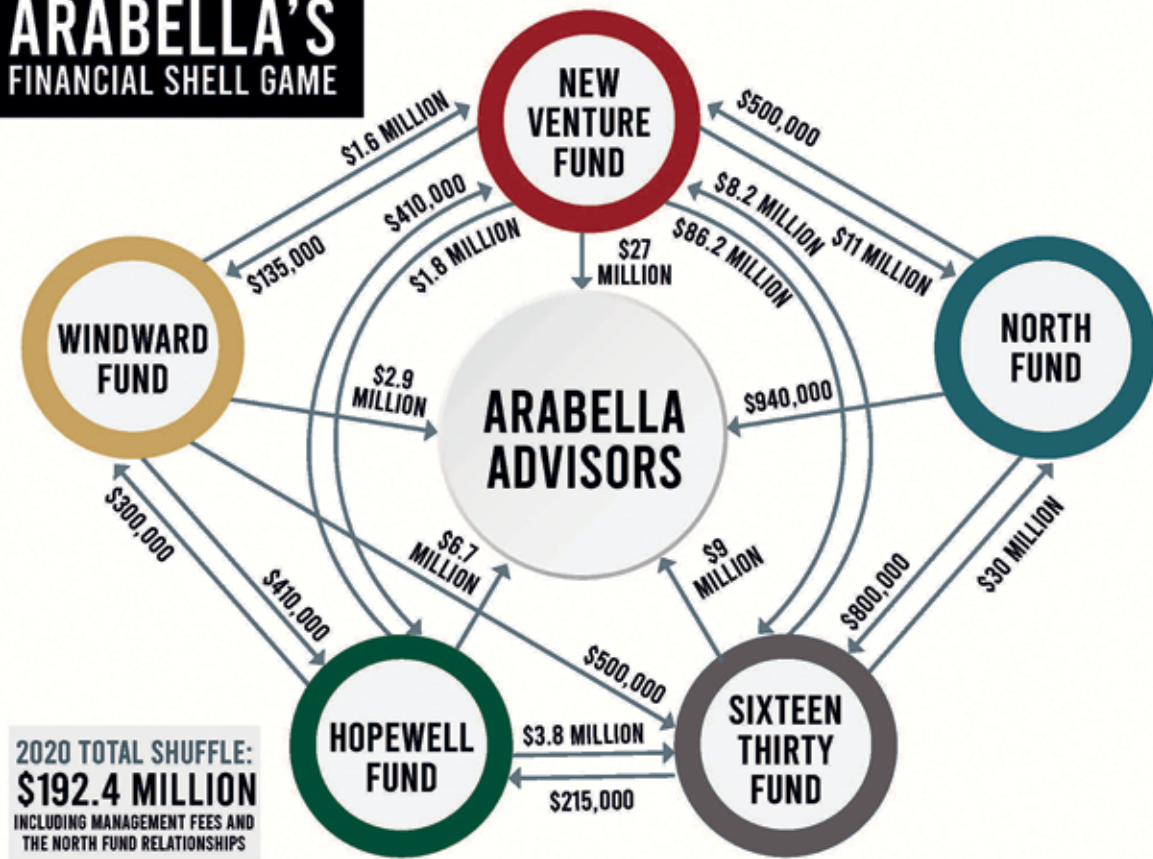
Arabella Advisors “Dark Money” Empire

The Arabella Advisors network raised \$1.7 billion in 2020 alone to spend to defeat President Donald Trump, easily the largest amount the organization has raised in any year since it began the “dark money” network in 2006. The Capital Research Center first reported on a memo that described Arabella’s 2020 election agenda that included front groups that quickly closed once the election passed. The memo to megadonors purported to try to combat “political fear-mongering,” “attacks on voter registration,” “viral misinformation,” “disputes regarding election results,” and “post-Election Day violence.”

It’s strange any group raising a false panic about voter suppression would express concerns about “political fear-mongering” and “viral misinformation.” Several of the organizations focus specifically on voting.

Arabella Advisors is a private, for-profit public relations firm that runs several nonprofits. The Sixteen Thirty Fund is a 501(c)(4) lobbying organization. The North Fund, also a 501(c)(4), operates closely with the Sixteen Thirty Fund. The New Venture Fund is the education

ARABELLA'S FINANCIAL SHELL GAME



Credit: Capital Research Center

Arabella Advisors is a private, for-profit public relations firm that runs several nonprofits: the Sixteen Thirty Fund, a 501(c)(4) lobbying organization; the North Fund; a 501(c)(4) that operates closely with the Sixteen Thirty Fund; the New Venture Fund, the 501(c)(3) education arm; and the Hopewell Fund and Windward Fund, 501(c)(3) education and research groups.

arm, or 501(c)(3). The Hopewell Fund and the Windward Fund are also 501(c)(3) education and research groups in the network.

Still, it's the Hopewell Fund that might sponsor the most significant of these groups, the Democracy Docket Legal Fund. The organization was founded in 2020 by Democrat super lawyer Marc Elias, who has been prominent in numerous Democrat litigations.

The legal fund has two sister organizations: Democracy Docket LLC, a for-profit that operates as a "news" website on voting cases, and the Democracy Docket Action Fund, which is fiscally sponsored by the North Fund.

The Sandler Foundation gave \$1.5 million to Hopewell, earmarked for the Democracy Docket Legal Fund. Omidyar Network, a major progressive donor founded by eBay

founder Pierre Omidyar, also gave \$1.5 million to the group. The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, a traditional funder of left-of-center causes, gave \$800,000 in 2020 to Hopewell earmarked for the Democracy Docket Legal Fund. Sherwood Foundation gave \$500,000 to the DDLF. In April 2021, the film production company Bad Robot, run by J.J. Abrams and Katie McGrath, donated \$1 million to the legal fund.

Another major player in the voting space from the Arabella network is the Center for Secure and Modern Elections, a project of the New Venture Fund. The CSME advocates for automatic voter registration, more mail-in voting, and weaker penalties for lying on voter registration forms. It also has a "sister" lobbying organization, CSME Action, which is part of the Sixteen Thirty Fund.

The CSME has close ties with non-Arabella linked Center for Tech and Civic Life, the organization that used \$350 million from Zuckerberg to fund election administration to drive up the Democrat vote in 2020.

While short of the Zuckerberg fortune dumped into running elections, the Arabella network also gave \$25 million to the Center for Tech and Civic Life. In April 2021, the Center for Tech and Civic Life launched the U.S. Alliance for Election Excellence (USAEE), a coalition of groups that includes Arabella's Center for Secure and Modern Elections. The USAEE aims to train local election officials in what it considers best practices.

The Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, a network of grant-making organizations, gave \$1 million to the New Venture Fund to expand mail-in voting, some of which likely went to the CSME, but was perhaps spread across the other New Venture voting groups.

Voting Rights Lab is a project of the New Venture Fund. The lobbying arm, Voting Rights Action, is fiscally sponsored by the Sixteen Thirty Fund.

Another New Venture Fund project is the Democracy Funders Collaborative Census Subgroup, better known simply as the Democracy Funders Collaborative. It is a group of left-of-center grant makers that came together in 2015 to plan a strategy for the 2020 Census count and how to gear it toward helping Democrats. Its donors included the Democracy Fund, a separate group founded by eBay co-founder and left-wing billionaire Omidyar and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, a network of grant makers.

The Democracy Fund and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund teamed with the Spitzer Trust to establish the Trusted Elections Fund in 2020. The Trusted Elections Fund, a project of the New Venture Fund, supposedly had the goal to address "election crises" or contested election results.

In June 2020, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, a nonprofit established in 1966 by Hewlett-Packard co-founder William Hewlett, gave the New Venture Fund a \$1 million grant earmarked to boost the Trusted Elections Fund.

Democracy for All 2021 Action was a project of the Sixteen Thirty Fund that lobbied for automatic and Election Day voter registration while opposing ID laws. The organization is officially a coalition of 20 groups. Deirdre Schifeling is the founder and campaign director of Democracy for All

2021 Action. Schifeling was also the leader of the Fight Back Table, which was a group preparing for "mass public unrest" in 2020 if Trump was re-elected.

The Fair Elections Center was founded as a New Venture Fund fiscally sponsored group in 2006, the organization spun off into an individual organization in 2018. The Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund gave \$1.2 million in 2018 and 2019 to the Fair Elections Center, according to data from the Capital Research Center.

The New Venture Fund also launched Voter Rights Action, with Democrat political veteran Laura Packard as the founder. In 2016, when working for MoveOn, Packard delivered about 500,000 signatures on a petition to the Justice Department demanding an investigation of what she said were voter suppression cases in Arizona and Alabama.

Common Cause

Among the oldest left-leaning watchdog groups is Common Cause, a 501(c)(4) that has historically focused on campaign finance, fighting corruption, and "good government" policies.

But Common Cause also sponsors the Protect the Vote Project that included more than 60,000 "election protection volunteers" across the country in 2020 to monitor polling locations and had a hotline to report cases of perceived voter suppression.

George Soros's Open Society Foundations has given Common Cause more than \$2 million since 2000. Since 2009, the Soros-sponsored Foundation to Promote Open Society has given \$600,000 to Common Cause.

Other traditional leftwing funders of Common Cause are the Arca Foundation, which has given about \$1.4 million to the watchdog group since 2000. Arca has also contributed to



Common Cause sponsors the Protect the Vote Project that, in 2020, had more than 60,000 "election protection volunteers" monitoring polling locations to report cases of perceived voter suppression.

the Center for American Progress, Demos, Color of Change, and other groups on the left. The Carnegie Corporation of New York, another common donor to such causes, gave \$1.8 million over the last two decades.

The Ford Foundation, another common donor to left-leaning causes, has contributed \$685,000 to Common Cause since 2000. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which usually promotes left-leaning health care policies, has given \$309,093 to Common Cause since 2002.

Corporate donors included Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund, giving at least \$579,500 since 2003 and the Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program, the fourth largest manager of donor-advised funds in the nation. The League of Women Voters has given at least \$506,500 since 2006 to Common Cause.

Progress Report

In March 2023, a coalition of more than 50 left-of-center groups, led by the Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights, issued a “progress report” evaluating the implementation of Biden’s Executive Order 14019 two years later.

Interestingly, that’s two years of Congress, watchdog groups, and the media attempting to get basic information about how agencies are applying the order. These groups—aligned with the Biden administration—had little trouble obtaining the information.

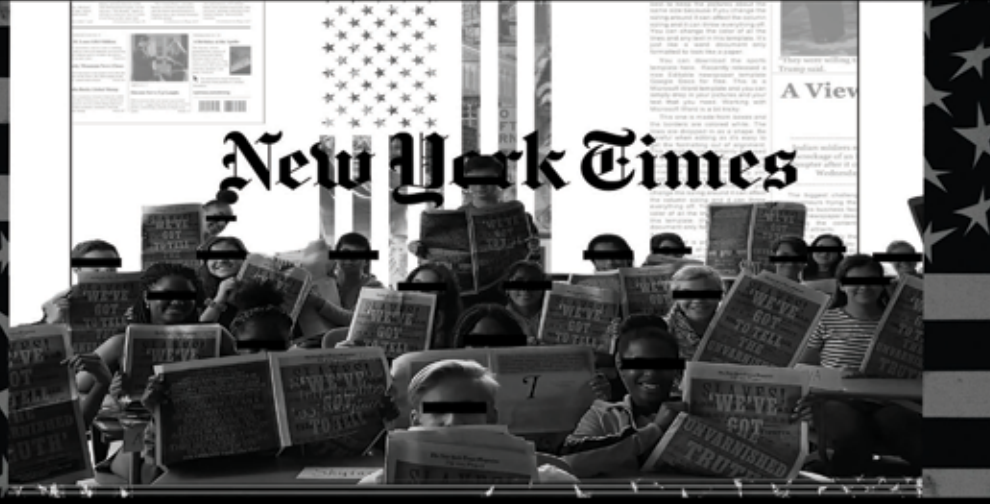
The coalition signing onto the report includes Demos, which sired the executive order, and is involved in its implementation. It also includes the American Federation of Teachers, Planned Parenthood Action Fund, Public Citizen, the Southern Poverty Law Center Action Fund, and the Arabella-backed Fair Election Center.

As of this writing, how many of these organization are participating in implementing Biden’s order is unknown. Though the conflict is clear. We already know the federal government isn’t picking apolitical nonprofits without a stake in the game. This is a throwback to the old school political machines—and now it has gone national. ■

Read previous articles from the Deception and Misdirection series online at CapitalResearch.org/category/deception-and-misdirection/.

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.

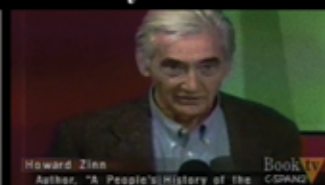
The series is hosted and directed by award-winning filmmaker Rob Montz, whose online documentary work has attracted millions of views and coverage in major outlets, including *The Economist*, *USA Today*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and The Adam Carolla Podcast.

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.



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



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DANGEROUS
DOCUMENTARIES



TEACHERS' UNIONS VS. TEACHERS, PARENTS, AND CHILDREN

By Aaron Withe

Summary: *All government unions are profoundly harmful, but the most damaging are the teachers' unions. Since 2020, they have lobbied and agitated successfully to keep kids out of schools—and keep their members receiving a paycheck despite not showing up at work. They have forced children to wear masks for eight hours a day despite the absence of scientific evidence in favor of this policy. They have inflicted sex education, often in graphic and offensively inappropriate detail, upon fourth graders. They have begun implementation of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which teaches children to segregate themselves based upon race or the color of their skin. But the shock of COVID-19 and the resulting overreaction of the education establishment so upset and disarranged the education landscape that things once thought impossible have now drifted into the range of possibility.*

All government unions are profoundly harmful, but the most damaging are the teachers' unions. Since 2020, they have lobbied and agitated successfully to keep kids out of schools—and keep their members receiving a paycheck despite not showing up at work. They have forced children to wear masks for eight hours a day despite the absence of scientific evidence in favor of this policy—and they have done so while their leaders party and frolic, maskless, with the likes of Barack Obama. They have inflicted sex education, often in graphic and offensively inappropriate detail, upon fourth graders. They have begun implementation of Critical Race Theory (CRT), which teaches children to segregate themselves based upon race or the color of their skin. Martin Luther King, who dreamed of a world in which our children are measured by the content of their character rather than the color of their skin, must be rolling in his grave.

I've always said that a good measure of a society is how well it treats its most vulnerable citizens. When we started closing schools, we said that we care more about the perceived threat of COVID-19 to adults than we care about the mental health of children.



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All government unions are profoundly harmful, but the most damaging are the teachers' unions. Since 2020, they have lobbied and agitated successfully to keep kids out of schools—and keep their members receiving a paycheck despite not showing up at work.

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Between them, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers have nearly five million members. Their national associations report annual revenues of approximately \$370 million and \$200 million, respectively, which are drawn overwhelmingly from dues paid by those members, and that doesn't include the hundreds of millions in revenue that their local affiliates collect.

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The National Education Association's office in Washington, DC is just up Sixteenth Street from the White House, an indication of how much proximity to power means to these "educators."

The Bigfoot lobbyists of the NEA and AFT want more more more when it comes to spending, as lobbies invariably do, but they are frequently found in a negative posture, for no one hates the idea of *reform* quite as much as a teachers' union.

Vouchers, charter schools, education savings accounts, merit pay for teachers...you name it, the teachers' unions are against it. Anything that promises to empower parents and raise the quality of public education is like poison to these characters. AFT president Randi Weingarten & Co. fear reform the way that an unsightly wart fears the dermatologist.

The NEA's office in Washington, DC is just up Sixteenth Street from the White House, an indication of how much proximity to power means to these "educators." Although it once prided itself on being a "professional association," by 1976 the increasingly politicized NEA was ready to make its first presidential endorsement. Despite his campaign pledge to streamline the federal government and sharply reduce the number of agencies, Jimmy Carter made a whopping exception for the Department of Education.

The establishment of the US Department of Education (DOE) in 1979 was largely a payoff to the National Education Association, which vigorously supported Carter in his successful 1976 campaign for the presidency. Curiously, the rival American Federation of Teachers *opposed* the creation of the DOE—not out of any high principle, but because the AFT feared it would be cut out of the NEA-dominated action.

Substantial opposition to this new department existed among key advisers within the Carter administration, who regarded it as just another superfluous bureaucracy. Much of the liberal press was cool to the idea; the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* editorialized against it as "a cynical payoff to the NEA." But Congress had warmed to the idea. As historian Gareth Davies noted in his account of education politics, the previously apolitical NEA had contributed to the campaigns of 350 congressional candidates in 1978, over 80 percent of whom had won.

The union paid good money to buy these politicians, and most of them stayed bought. The House of Representatives approved this bureaucratic monstrosity in 1979 by a tight vote of 215–201, and President Carter signed it with an embarrassing puppy-dog eagerness. A tough reelection loomed, and the Carter campaign was now "a wholly owned subsidiary of the NEA," in the harsh verdict of Democratic New York Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Not that the union disagreed with Senator Moynihan's characterization. After the DOE was born, an NEA official bragged, "We're the only union with our own Cabinet department." Teachers are paid based on the number of years they've worked at the job and the number of credits they've accumulated in continuing education classes. Their skill as teachers, and the amount of learning the children in their care have done, has absolutely zero effect on their salary. Should the school district be forced to tighten its belt, the outstanding young teacher will get a pink slip while the lazy deadwood protected by tenure keeps collecting a paycheck.

In protecting their worst members, government unions such as the NEA punish the talented and push one and all toward the mediocre middle. Their goal is to keep everyone at the 50th percentile, which in practice means dragging down the best and shielding the poorest performers from suffering any consequences from their bad work.

Ideally, the worst government employees—say, the bottom 5 percent—would be fired, and the best would receive raises and other rewards. Unfortunately, the contracts negotiated under collective bargaining do not allow this. They operate on a one-size-fits-all principle that is always and everywhere the enemy of creativity and justice.

No wonder a public school principal in New York City acidly observed of the AFT president: "Randi Weingarten would protect a dead body in the classroom. That's her job."

This is unfair to good teachers, and it is a crime against children. The ballyhooed education reform movements that have arisen for the last forty years, from a 1983 blue-ribbon

panel's *A Nation at Risk* report to President Barack Obama's modest proposal to expand charter schools and teacher evaluation, have mostly run aground for one overriding reason: the power of teachers' unions.

The California Teachers Association spent a staggering \$57 million to defeat a series of ballot initiatives in 2005 that sought to rein in government unions. Among these was a measure supported by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to limit the use of public-sector employee dues for political purposes. The Terminator was reduced to a Kindergarten Cop by this avalanche of spending.

Education reformer Terry Moe writes, "The teachers unions have more influence on the public schools than any other group in American society." The rules under which schools operate are shaped by union demands in collective bargaining, and at the macro level, union political power dictates to a significant extent the contours and content of federal and state education policies. When the NEA was a professional association, as it had been from 1857 until it officially became a union in 1969, many of its schoolteacher members regarded collective bargaining as unsuited to their profession. Until its unionization, the NEA was largely controlled by principals, superintendents, and administrators, whose ideology was progressivism with a capital *P* (the rival and smaller American Federation of Teachers was an AFL-affiliated union from its launching in 1916).

Sam Lambert, the NEA's executive secretary, provided a sneak peek into what the erstwhile professional association was about to turn into when he said in 1967, on the cusp of unionization, that the "NEA will become a political power second to no other special interest group.... NEA will organize this profession from top to bottom into logical operational units that can move swiftly and effectively with power unmatched by any other organized group in the nation."

You will notice that the education of children was not even an afterthought to Mr. Lambert. It didn't take second, or third, or even fourth place to the NEA's new goal: the ugly pursuit of raw political power.

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The education of children didn't take even fourth place to the NEA's new goal: the ugly pursuit of raw political power.

Since about 1975, just under two-thirds of American teachers have been covered by collective bargaining agreements, while about 80 percent of teachers nationally belong to the NEA or AFT. (The disparity is the result of union members in the seven states without collective bargaining.)

The NEA and AFT do not merely express opinions on public issues related to schools and teachers. They roam far afield, putting money and muscle behind such causes as legal abortion and gay rights. In almost all areas their formal positions are more or less identical with those of the national Democratic Party.

For instance, the NEA supports far-reaching gun control, stating on its website that "we must limit access to guns in the first place by providing universal background checks, banning assault-style weapons, passing red flag laws, and other legislation." It also explicitly supports the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare); the controversial Equality Act, which critics say would wipe out religious liberty in the name of LGBTQ rights; Democrat-sponsored "voting rights" bills that would override state protections against voter fraud; amnesty for illegal immigrants; and more.

Whether these are laudable or deplorable pieces of legislation is beside the point. The point is that the NEA is using dues money, some of it taken from unwilling members, to push an agenda that has nothing to do with the education of children.

Terry Moe, the Stanford professor and an expert on education policy and those who make it, says of teachers' unions that "their capacity for converting money into power is way beyond what almost all interest groups can even dream of."

Teachers' unions are "consistently among the organizations that contribute the most money to candidates and political groups." In April 2022, my friend and the Freedom Foundation's marketing director, Joey McCabe, released a report revealing that of the \$377 million the NEA took in from dues and agency fees, just \$32 million went toward representing its members. The union spent \$180 million-plus on political activities, lobbying, gifts, and grants, mostly to liberal nonprofits.

Think about that for a second. The largest teachers' union in America spent less than 10 percent of the money it collected from members on representing those members and about 50 percent on its pet political projects. If any private-sector business operated this way, they'd be out of business in a week. But not the NEA: this is how they've operated for decades!

Between 1990 and 2020, the NEA and the AFT made about \$150 million in direct political contributions—of which “more than 97 percent went to liberals.” The minor difference is that the AFT gives almost exclusively to Democrats, while the NEA might give one dollar in ten to Republicans.

Because teachers themselves are thinking human beings who do not march in lockstep, a huge gap exists between the political views of individual teachers and the unions that purport to speak for them. The NEA’s own internal polling has found that almost as many members consider themselves conservatives as liberals. Rubbing salt into the wound, the disaffected members are forced to pay (with their dues money) for the promotion of views they find obnoxious. For instance, the Government Accountability Institute reports that between 2006 and 2020, the AFT and the NEA “donated approximately \$726,200 to GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network),” which promotes “affirming education” for “LGBTQ+ students.” And between 2018 and 2021, those same two teachers’ unions sent about \$3 million to groups that fund Black Lives Matter.

This flies in the face of Thomas Jefferson’s maxim: “To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical.”

I fully realize that Thomas Jefferson is the worst thing in the world—a Dead White Man—but the author of the Declaration of Independence is still a hero around the offices of the Freedom Foundation.

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Government unions differ from those in the private sector in many ways, but foremost is that described by Terry Moe: “By participating actively in electoral campaigns... and by using their members, money, and organizations to get favored candidates elected to office, the unions can play a role in *selecting the very people they will be bargaining with* (emphasis in original).” Moe notes that the Michigan

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Unfortunately, this cozy arrangement excludes We the Taxpayers, who get to shell out for this almost obscene exercise in mutual back-scrubbing.

Education Association actually distributes a how-to manual to its members titled “Electing Your Own Employer, It’s as Easy as 1, 2, 3.”

Unfortunately, this cozy arrangement excludes We the Taxpayers, who get to shell out for this almost obscene exercise in mutual back-scrubbing.

A particularly egregious example of teachers’ unions selecting their own employer occurred in a 2019 school board election in Centralia, Washington, which has all of thirteen thousand registered voters.

A former Freedom Foundation staffer, Jami Lund, was running for reelection as an incumbent. Jami was well qualified for the position: not only had he spent sixteen years as a senior policy analyst at the Freedom Foundation, where he was recognized as a top scholar on education policy and finance, but he was a twenty-year Centralia resident whose three grown sons had graduated from Centralia schools.

Jami was a popular guy and a tireless campaigner. He raised over \$14,000 from over 140 donors. His opponent raised only \$100 from local sources, and that from a single donation. Yet she won by a razor-thin margin of 2,543–2,435.

How did it happen? Simple: the Washington Education Association, Washington Federation of State Employees, the Service Employees International Union, and other unions spent more than \$92,000 to defeat Jami. As he said, that was “a lot of campaign money to overcome in a volunteer school board race.” Jami’s opponent did not want to be associated with dirty politics and asked the WEA to stop politicking on her behalf, but the union just kept dumping its members’ money into the race. The special interests spent more than seven dollars per registered voter to send a message: if you disagree with the WEA, they will use all their resources to defeat you.

Choosing your own boss means dictating your terms of employment—and shafting the taxpayers.

In addition to salaries and benefits, collective bargaining also determines the rules under which schools operate. Up for negotiation is everything from paid leave to disciplining teachers, and from the length a faculty meeting may last to how a senior teacher goes about poaching the job of a junior teacher. These rules are often byzantine in their complexity and mind-blowing in their pettiness. They exist to serve one end: the desires of teachers and their union. Children, and the quality of education they receive, play no role in their establishment.

“Teachers are members of the pension elite,” writes Moe. The union-supported elected officials give them retirement benefits which dwarf those of the vast majority of Americans. Typically, they retire young—no hanging on till sixty-two or sixty-five or even seventy like most working stiffs—and almost all teachers are members of guaranteed-annuity “defined-benefit” programs whose munificence and liberality can be staggeringly lavish for those teachers who work twenty-five years or more. Six-figure pensions are not uncommon.

Teachers, says Moe, are “among the most advantaged American workers when it comes to health insurance.” Almost all (95 percent) receive health insurance as a perquisite of their job, whereas in the private sector less than two-thirds of workers do. Close to half of teachers (43 percent) do not have to pitch in toward their monthly premiums. Their coverage is also likelier to be gold-plated than that enjoyed by workers in the private sector—that is, by the workers whose taxes pay the salaries and benefits of those teachers.

Teachers’ unions actively fight against a quality education for our kids. That sounds harsh, but it’s true. Their agenda is not to educate our children but rather to grow the size of government, and in particular those activities of government that have to do with education.

If pouring more money into education somehow achieved a better educational system, then they might have an argument. But for decades now, one of the most established and irrefutable findings of social science has been that there is no positive relationship between spending and quality in public education. If anything, the reverse is true: the more money spent, the worse students fare along a variety of measurements, from graduation rates to test results.

The most recent data reveal that New York City (\$25,139) and the District of Columbia (\$22,406) spend the most per pupil on public education. And Philadelphia spends around \$24,000 per student, but only 17 percent of eighth graders are proficient in reading. The District of Columbia—the nation’s capital—is consistently at or near the bottom in reading, mathematics, and science test scores, and New York City is usually just above them, firmly entrenched in the bottom half.

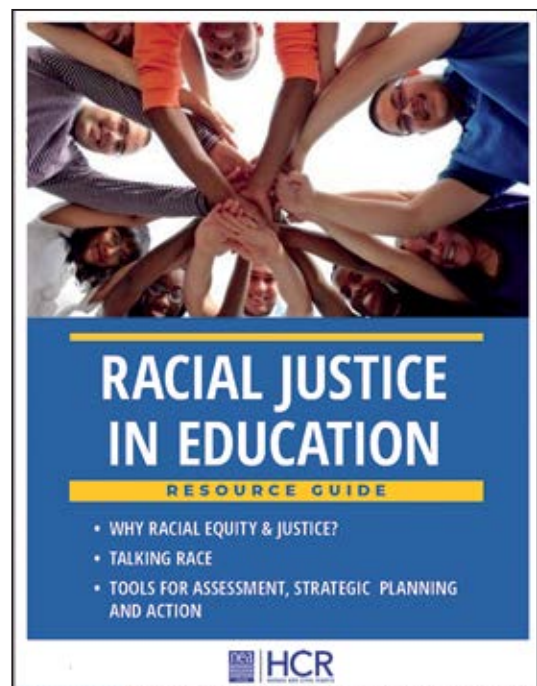
The states in which the teachers’ unions have achieved the greatest influence typically score poorly on a wide range of measures. Examples are voluminous. To take just one, in 2019, the last year before COVID distorted state partic-

ipation rates, the states with the most powerful teachers’ unions—California, New York, Illinois, Oregon—were in the lowest third of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests in Grade 4 Mathematics.

Oregon hit upon one failsafe way to improve its near-the-bottom graduation rates. The prospects for any serious education reform in the state were nil, given the chokehold that the teachers’ unions have on the state legislature and the governor’s office. The solution? To increase graduation rates, let’s lower standards! So now you can emerge fully fledged from a public high school in the Beaver State without knowing how to read or write or do math.

Ain’t that great?

Teachers’ unions are writing the playbook of the hard left. The Freedom Foundation obtained *Racial Justice in Education*, an internal document published in 2018 by the National Education Association. It illustrates, in shocking detail, the degree to which the nation’s largest teachers’ union embraces the tenets of Critical Race Theory and shows how this neo-Marxist ideology serves as the fountain-



Credit: National Education Association. License: <https://bit.ly/30wHCOQ>

Racial Justice in Education illustrates, in shocking detail, the degree to which the nation’s largest teachers’ union embraces the tenets of Critical Race Theory and shows how this neo-Marxist ideology serves as the fountainhead of the union’s support of a host of radical policies, from defunding the police to banning voter ID requirements.

head of the union's support of a host of radical policies, from defunding the police to banning voter ID requirements. This guidebook, which remained almost invisible outside union circles, was produced well before these noxious trends became widely known. But their discovery shows that the NEA was critical in laying the groundwork for the movements that nearly tore our country apart in 2020–21. A mere two years after the NEA published *Racial Justice in Education*, the union's evil plan came to fruition, as Portland and other cities starved law enforcement and CRT was shoved down children's throats all over America.

A full reading of the eighty-page *Racial Justice in Education* leaves one stupefied. It also reveals that the NEA holds views on race that many, if not most, Americans and most teachers would find troubling or even repellent. For instance, the NEA believes that:

- **Structural Racism Is Everywhere.** “Racial dynamics, disparities and divisions permeate our society, communities, schools and classrooms. Systemic racism is so deeply rooted in our history, culture, and institutions that there’s no escaping it. Visible or not, its impacts are ever-present,” says the NEA.
- **Being Colorblind Is Racist.** “Racism is perpetuated by silence—and silence is complicity. Being ‘colorblind’ often serves as a pretense to downplay the significance of race, deny the existence of racism, and erase the experience of students of color.”
- **Whites Are Privileged Because of Their Race.** “White people are racially privileged, even when they are economically underprivileged.” (Tell that to an out-of-work West Virginia coal miner.)
- **Only Whites Can Be Racist.** “[T]he biases of whites have a broader impact and get reinforced by institutions and systems of power in ways that the biases of people and communities of color do not.” In the section titled “Key Terms and Glossary,” the NEA defines “racism” as a “historically rooted system of power hierarchies based on race—infused in our institutions, policies and culture— that benefits white people and hurts people of color.”
- **More Government Is the Answer.** “Depicting government efforts to promote racial equity and inclusion as misguided, unnecessary and/or improper... [u]ndermines support for a significant government role in dismantling systemic racism” and “[s]uggests that if government would just ‘get out of the way’ (i.e., stop infringing on the individual freedom of whites), we could have a ‘colorblind’ country once and for all.”

• **Fighting Racism Means Supporting Left-Wing Policies.** In a section titled “Action Planning Guidance,” the NEA guide urges teachers to:

- “Initiate a campaign to eliminate resource officers [police] from schools.” (The AFT also makes this demand.)
- “Work on campaigns or initiatives that attempt to divest from prisons.”
- “Join state comprehensive immigration reform campaign/s.”
- “Defend Dreamers from the latest attacks from the Trump administration.”
- “Support Black Lives Matter events and efforts to remove public symbols of racism and white supremacy. Start or support a campaign to remove statues or change school names that celebrate white supremacy or demean people of color.”
- “Start or join a campaign to pass automatic voter registration policies in your state. Start or join a campaign in your state to fight voter suppression, voting ID requirements, criminal re-enfranchisement and gerrymandering.”

Like a tornado from Hell, the NEA's preferred policies swept over America in 2020 and 2021. Woke mobs toppled statues of everyone from George Washington to abolitionists, police departments were defunded and police officers assaulted, businesses were destroyed and the streets ran red with blood, illegal immigration reached record levels, schoolchildren were taught to hate their country's past and to judge each other on the basis of skin color.... It was the realization of the NEA's dream.

Unfortunately, it was a nightmare for the rest of us.

Union officials are careful not to talk like this in public—but *Racial Justice in Education* reveals their real agenda.

At the height of the insanity, the NEA's 2021 Representative Assembly adopted several New Business Items (NBIs) endorsing Critical Race Theory. When it became apparent that these would cause serious blowback, the union scrubbed them from its website—but as our Max Nelson reported, the internet's Wayback Machine has a way of keeping embarrassing items from disappearing down the memory hole. These included:

- *NBI A* committed the NEA to eradicating “institutional racism in our public school system” by, among other things, “increasing the implementation of... critical race theory” and opposing “racist laws, policies, and practices; the over-criminalization of communities,



Like a tornado from Hell, the NEA's preferred policies swept over America in 2020 and 2021.

students, and families of Native people and people of color; as well as the criminalization of poverty.”

- *NBI 2* directed the NEA to conduct opposition research on—in other words, dig up dirt and smear—“organizations attacking educators doing anti-racist work,” i.e., promoting Critical Race Theory. If you’re critical of CRT, the NEA is going to hunt you down.
- *NBI 39* directed the NEA to “fight back against anti-CRT rhetoric” and to “oppose attempts to ban critical race theory and/or *The 1619 Project*.”⁸⁸

This was an NEA project, but the AFT, under Randi Weingarten, has also put leftist social and cultural projects in the forefront. The Government Accountability Project notes, “Rather than focus on pension issues and protection against mistreatment, Randi Weingarten’s agenda has emphasized radical changes in education that do not serve students or teachers.”

As for serving parents... Hah! The teachers’ union big shots have come to regard parents as the enemy. They stand in the way of indoctrination. Those parents who aren’t on board with CRT or expanding the number of genders beyond male and female must be vanquished. Thus, the NEA’s EdJustice website encourages teachers to avail themselves of resources that urge them to establish “a private, virtual connection with an LGBTQ student that is not supported at home, so you can check in with them about their family dynamic and brainstorm self-care strategies.” This is an example of what the Government Accountability Project calls the effort by teachers’ unions to expand “the role of the school in the community and interrupt[t] the traditional role of parents as the heads of the nuclear family.”

But parents, as we are seeing, aren’t going to stand for this displacement any longer.

Critical Race Theory tells us that the public education system, like all of America, was conceived in vile racism and remains inherently racist. You’d think this line of argument might cause the teachers’ unions some discomfort—after all, they’ve been effectively controlling the system for decades—but it doesn’t seem to have cost them any lost sleep. Their main concern isn’t raising the next generation of informed citizens; it’s indoctrinating the next generation of liberal voters.

* * *

They say character is revealed in a crucible, a trial of the spirit. The teachers’ unions sure revealed their character during the COVID-19 crisis of 2020–2022.

They successfully kept kids out of schools, made sure that the children were all wearing masks, began implementing the teaching of Critical Race Theory in our schools, and even lowered the standards for graduation to not include reading and writing. They had a broad agenda, but it didn’t include caring about our kids.

The first graders [my wife] Aubree is teaching haven’t known school outside of COVID. These kids struggle to get through a full in-person school day. The boys and girls she is teaching today are far worse off than the kids she was teaching two or three years ago—pre-COVID, pre-lockdown, pre-Dr. Fauci. Kids should be in school full time, interacting with their schoolmates, without any remote learning. It just doesn’t work. We don’t need to be protecting teachers from a variant such as Omicron, which 99.99 percent of people survive. Most teachers agree. They want to be back in the classroom.

Think back to March 2020, when most of us first heard of COVID-19. Before that, *coronavirus* sounded like something you’d have the morning after drinking one beer too many.

The newness of this virus and the uncertainty of its virulence made pretty much everyone understandably cautious. The media acted as an accelerant, portraying COVID-19 as the bubonic plague of the twenty-first century. They pounded home the message night after night that we were all at risk of death or serious illness, and that only by listening to and obeying the authorities might we escape this nightmare with our lives.



Credit: Jasmine Barnes. License: <https://bit.ly/44HxofC>

The first graders [my wife] Aubree is teaching haven’t known school outside of COVID. These kids struggle to get through a full in-person school day.

As I said, we were all nervous. No one quite knew what to do. Certainly, steps to limit the spread of the virus were justified. But we learned pretty quickly that COVID-19, unlike many infectious threats of the past, didn't affect children much. It cut its deadly swathe through the other end of the age spectrum.

Largely by the end of the 2019–20 school year, and absolutely by the beginning of the 2020–21 school year, we knew that children could safely attend schools and be taught in person.

The teachers' unions pretended not to know this. To borrow an annoying phrase of the woke left, they did not believe "the Science." So they acted in the most sickening and cynical way. Rahm Emanuel, the former mayor of Chicago who earlier served as senior adviser to President Bill Clinton, once said, "You never want a serious crisis to go to waste." What he meant was that politicians ought to take advantage of the momentary confusion and even hysteria of a crisis to ram through measures that in ordinary times would have no chance of success.

The teachers' unions, following Emanuel's jaded advice, used the COVID-19 crisis to shirk work and punish children. In cities from Los Angeles to Chicago, first they said they would not return to work until a vaccine was available and every teacher had been vaxxed. (Oh, and by the way, they demanded that teachers be first in line!) After the teachers had taken the jab, their union said they would not return to the classroom until the children had been vaccinated. Some parents might prefer not to have their kids vaxxed because "the Science" had found that they were at minimal risk from COVID-19, while the risks associated with the vaccine were less certain. Well, too bad: the wishes of parents had to be overridden by government mandates.

At every step of the way, the teachers' unions dragged their feet, resisting the reopening of schools for in-class and face-



Credit: Thomas Hawk. License: <https://bit.ly/43KsLV5>.

At every step of the way, the teachers' unions dragged their feet, resisting the reopening of schools for in-class and face-to-face learning.

to-face learning. The kids could have been encased in bubble wrap and that wouldn't have been enough to satisfy the union bosses. Even in 2022, as all but the screechiest Chicken Littles began returning to a semblance of normality, Teachers Los Angeles, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, and the Chicago Teachers Union fought kicking and screaming to keep the schools closed or to keep children out of the schools. They were opposed in this effort by some of their liberal allies, who had seen the writing on the wall—or, rather, the numbers in the focus groups and opinion polls—and knew that the public was sick and tired of lockdowns and would make those who engineered them pay on Election Day.

Even a radical left-wing mayor like Chicago's Lori Lightfoot pleaded with the teachers' union to go back to class: "I'm urging teachers. Show up to your schools. Your kids need you." Many teachers agreed—but their unions did not.

The teachers' unions also saw in COVID-19 a rare and inviting opportunity to push the most radical elements of their agenda. On the West Coast, this meant a loud call by the United Teachers Los Angeles to defund the police. The AFT seized upon COVID as a Trojan horse with which to attack what it called "the structural racism embedded within the social fabric of the United States."

The virus proved very useful to radicals. It was almost as if they were glad it happened.

* * *

The status quo of mediocre schools in which reform is blocked by powerful teachers' unions may seem eternal. But as the economist Herbert Stein once laid down in Stein's Law, "If something cannot go on forever, it will stop."

The shock of COVID-19 and the resulting overreaction of the education establishment—the lockdowns, the refusal of the unions to permit teachers to teach face-to-face, the snarling man-dates—so upset and disarranged the landscape that things once thought impossible have now drifted into the range of possibility. ■

This article is an abridged version of chapter 4 of Freedom Is the Foundation: How We Are Defeating Progressive Tyranny by Aaron Withe (Post Hill Press, 2023). All citations were omitted. Full citations are available in the book and will be available in the online version of this article on [CapitalResearch.org](https://www.CapitalResearch.org).

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