



COMMON CAUSE

(News from the front lines)

Common Cause's incisive reports on voting problems and on the financial crisis garnered attention in *USA Today*, the *Los Angeles Times*, on CNN, CNBC, CBS, NPR and in other media across the nation – as far away as Anchorage, Alaska.

The Washington Post

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2008

High Turnout, New Procedures May Mean An Election Day Mess



"The voting process is going to be tested in a way it has not been in recent history," said Tova Wang, vice president for research at Common Cause, a government watchdog group.

Election 2008: What We're Doing

Protecting the Vote

Election Day 2008 is upon us and it will be one of the most historic elections in American history. On November 4th, a record-breaking number of American voters will choose our next President and a new Congress in the midst of an major economic crisis and after the longest and most-expensive campaign in history.

We are not just waiting to see what happens on Election Day. Our elections system is still fraught with technological, legal, and administrative barriers to voting which lead to the disenfranchisement of too many citizens. With the generous help of a major funder, the voting and elections program at Common Cause has never been stronger and we have a number of exciting programs geared toward empowering voters during this election cycle.

We greatly expanded our participation in the Election Protection coalition, which was formed to provide legal advice to voters. We will be on the ground in many key states, including Colorado, Georgia, New Mexico, Ohio, Indiana, North Carolina and Pennsylvania, working to ensure that people have no problem registering to vote, that they face no obstacles to voting on Election Day and that their vote is properly counted.

Monitoring the Vote

We hope all goes well in this election, but we know there will be voting problems: technology failures, partisan chicanery, human error and poor election administration. In an exhaustive report on voting in ten key states, *Voting in 2008: Ten Swing States**, Common Cause found that with record-breaking turnout and voter registration in this election, "the stakes are as high as they have ever been, [but] significant problems in the basic functions of America's election administration system persist—and in a few cases, have even worsened over the past few years."

The report, which was heavily covered in the media, goes on to say it's not too late to fix many of the problems. States can act to make sure there are enough ballots at the polls, workers are properly trained, and that there are enough poll workers on Election Day.

* The report, and others mentioned on page 3, are available on our website's Research Center.



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Power of Advocacy

Through grassroots action and inside lobbying, we are on the front lines pushing back the special interests and winning victories for the public interest.



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Common Cause is nonpartisan. That means as an organization we do not support or oppose candidates, nor do we make contributions as an organization to candidates. But it does not mean we are standing on the sidelines. We are actively working on many fronts to hold candidates accountable on our issues, to ensure that every

eligible voter has an opportunity to cast a vote and to make certain that every vote is counted as cast. Throughout this newsletter and on our website, www.commoncause.org, you will find stories about our work on elections across the country.

Common Cause attended both the Democrats' and the Republicans' national party conventions in Denver and Minneapolis. As a Member of Congress years ago, I went to conventions as a delegate. This time, I went as an outsider, using the grand convergence of so many elected officials and political activists to raise our issues. You can read more about our time at the conventions front page of this newsletter and on our blog, www.commonblog.org

Being nonpartisan also means that in our lobbying efforts in Congress and state legislatures we seek bipartisan support for the reform legislation we are pushing. This is in keeping with the organization's belief that members of different political affiliations can agree on broad issues of revitalizing government. And we understand the practical necessity of bringing together both sides to succeed in passing legislation.

Beyond our organizational activities, many of the 400,000 Common Cause members and supporters are engaged in this historic and exciting election in one way or another – being active in campaigns, canvassing or making phone calls, donating money and just talking to their friends and neighbors about their favored candidate.

We all are anxious about the outcome on November 4th. **Vote!** After the election is over, join us next year as we press for reform around the states and in the nation's capital.

Bob Edgar
President & CEO

UPDATE ON OUR ISSUES

National Popular Vote

As we approach another Election Day with a close presidential race, raising questions about the popular vote and the electoral count, our push for National Popular Vote (NPV) has continued. NPV is a campaign to pass legislation in the states that would guarantee a majority of its Electoral College votes to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In California, an NPV bill passed the legislature, but unfortunately was vetoed by the Governor. We came within minutes of passing a bill in Massachusetts, but time ran out – another push will come next session.

Ethics

As the 110th Congress came to an end (pending a potential post-election lame duck session), the House put the finishing touches on historic ethics legislation by appointing the members of the new ethics commission. Common Cause applauded the appointments and will be closely monitoring the performance of the commission.

Clean Elections

Support for clean elections/public financing legislation took a big step forward in the 110th Congress with the introduction of a strong bill in the House. Coupled with a bipartisan bill in the Senate, Common Cause and other reform groups are ready for a push early next year for historic public financing of congressional campaigns.



TIMELY, IMPORTANT REPORTS FROM COMMON CAUSE

During this election period, we have, in collaboration with other organizations and on our own, produced reports analyzing some critical issues, especially those impacting voting and the election:

Ask Yourself Why ... They Didn't See This Coming: Spotlights campaign contributions and lobbying of the financial services industry and how it shaped the government's response to the problems of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and giant Wall Street firms. This report, issued the week Congress was negotiating the bailout legislation, was featured in the Chicago Tribune, USA Today, LA Times, CNBC and other media.

Voting in 2008: 10 Swing States: Assesses the election preparedness of ten swing states expected to draw record turnout on Nov. 4 and makes recommendations for reform.

50 State Report Card: Examines all 50 states' voting technology and their preparedness for the upcoming election.

Deceptive Practices 2.0: Looks at the potential for deceptive practices intended to disenfranchise voters to go online, through emails, phony websites and other uses of new technologies.

We also will have two reports laying out the critical areas in need of reform for the next Congress and new Administration: *Campaign Finance and Media*.

Visit www.commoncause.org and click on *Research Center* to see all these reports.



Profile Arn Pearson

Riding herd over Common Cause's issue programs is one of the key jobs at Common Cause. It requires a unique blend of managerial skills, patience and perseverance, policy expertise and campaign experience. Arn Pearson, vice president for programs, has the background and calm temperament for the position.

Arn joined the Common Cause staff in 2006 as campaign reform director, bringing with him extensive experience with the groundbreaking clean elections law in his home state of Maine. At Common Cause he has helped create federal campaign finance legislation and worked to defend the newly-passed clean elections bill in Connecticut.

Before coming to Common Cause, Arn was a leader of the Maine Citizen Leadership Fund, where he helped win important reforms on corporate accountability, prescription drug pricing and tax fairness. Arn put together the legal team defending Maine's landmark Clean Election law, leading to a federal appeals court victory in 2000.

Arn graduated from Cornell and received his law degree from Georgetown University Law Center.

Born in upstate New York, Arn grew up in Maine and now lives there with his family, including three young children. Arn's children are familiar to everyone at Common Cause as background noise on the many conference calls Arn joins in to stay in touch with staff around the country.

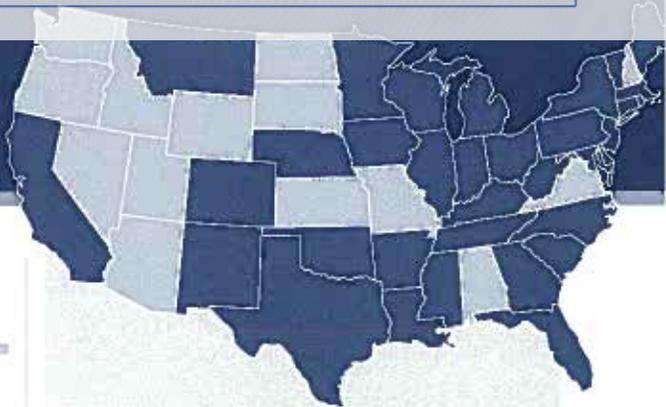


Bob Edgar and Heidi Kitrosser, University of Minnesota Associate Professor of Law spoke at a Common Cause-sponsored panel on abuse of power and the Constitution during the Republican Convention in Minnesota. *The Nation* reporter John Nichols also was on the panel.



Power of States

In state capitols across the country, Common Cause state organizations are the leaders for reform.



We have state organizations in 35 states, shown here in the darker blue shading

STATE UPDATES

Illinois – Pay to Play

Common Cause supported a campaign by the Illinois Campaign for Political Reform to pass legislation ending the practice of state contractors making huge campaign contributions to state officials. The bill would substantially end Illinois' pay-to-play politics and is the first step toward broader reforms. Thanks in part to last-minute lobbying by Senator Barack Obama, the bill passed.

California – Redistricting

California voters will consider whether to approve Prop 11, an initiative establishing an independent commission to draw legislative district lines. The redistricting reform measure has drawn bitter opposition from incumbent politicians, but support from a broad array of business, reform and other organizations has boosted the chances of Prop 11.



Dan Rather speaks at a symposium on media reform in the Big Tent in Denver, a space set up to accommodate the

hundreds of bloggers covering the convention. Common Cause staff traveled to Denver and Minneapolis-St. Paul to make certain our issues got attention from the thousands of politicians, reporters and pundits at the conventions.

CONNECTICUT CLEAN ELECTIONS REPORT

After passing clean elections legislation in 2006, defending it in the courts in 2007, Connecticut Common Cause this year analyzed the implementation of the groundbreaking public financing system. A recent report, *A New Kind of Politics*, concluded that the new program is beginning to realize the potential to radically change the way politics is run in Connecticut. From interviews Connecticut Common Cause has conducted with 11 candidates, it is clear that the program has provided the opportunity to run for office to people who had neither the money nor the connections to fund a competitive campaign. In short, Connecticut's new public financing for campaigns program not only has removed the deleterious effects of special interest political contributions but opened up state politics to an entirely new class of people: Citizens.



Andy Sauer, director of Common Cause Connecticut, was author of this report. Unfortunately for us, Andy will be leaving Common Cause this month.

"The idea of not worrying about raising money while you are trying to door knock and attend community events is just fantastic."

—Rep. James Spallone (D) talking about Connecticut's clean elections program

Make sure Common Cause continues to build on its success. Donate today using the envelope attached to this newsletter.





COMMON CAUSE INTERNATIONAL

When a group of Iraqi students visited Common Cause recently, they looked and acted much like a group of teenagers in the United States. But the still-present danger in their home country prevented us from taking photos, which might be posted and available to the “bad guys” in Iraq, who frown on anyone visiting America. See an email below from one of the students.

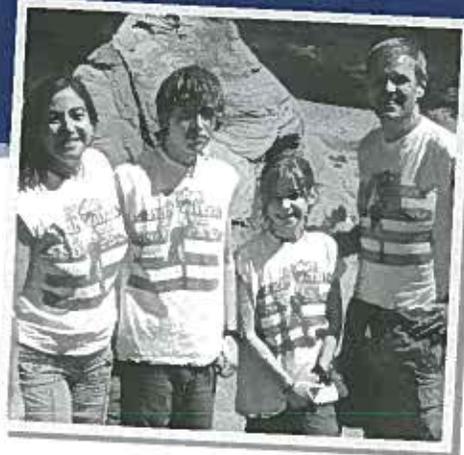
The students' visit was just one of the activities of our new Common Cause International program. In September, we hosted a delegation of Haitian advocates in Chicago to assist developing campaign skills and plans to work on important reform issues in Haiti. We brought together several Chicago-based advocacy groups to help the activists learn more about organizing tactics and strategies.



After several Iraqi teenagers visited Common Cause, we started an email “pen pal” relationship with some of them. Here’s an excerpt from one email:

“I’m not really into politics but I think that the army should stay in Iraq and finish what they started cause Iraq really needs help now, the situation is really bad in Iraq, the electricity is bad and the weather is hot, we’ve been suffering from that for the last 5 years but I hope some day Iraq will get better!

“I have been enjoying your blog reports from Denver very much....in all my 79 years, I have never gotten so much insight into what really goes on at a convention and I hope you will have the same kind of coverage of the Republican convention....particularly about the parties and who pays for them, as well as the smaller press conferences. Keep up your wonderful work!!!” —Rosalie Whitehill, NY



Profile Bob Phillips

Bob Phillips, a born and bred North Carolinian, took the reins of Common Cause North

Carolina (CCNC) seven years ago and has been at the center of its success since.

Most recently Bob helped put together a broad and diverse coalition that successfully pushed comprehensive lobbying and ethics reform through the North Carolina legislature.

With CCNC’s leadership, North Carolina became the first state in the south to pass a same-day registration bill and provide full public financing for statewide judges and for several other statewide offices. CCNC also was a key player in the state’s 2005 voter verified paper ballot law, now considered one of the nation’s most effective responses to the problem of paperless electronic voting machines.

In 2007, Bob initiated CCNC’s civic engagement outreach to the state’s historic black colleges and universities, which has helped attract more students of color to the Common Cause agenda.

Bob, a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, worked as a broadcast journalist in Raleigh and a press secretary for a lieutenant governor prior to working for Common Cause. Bob says, “After careers in the media and politics—it’s nice to be an advocate for the public good.”

Outside of his work, Bob is the father of two middle-schoolers, who he says “find him increasingly irrelevant.” He is also a passionate UNC basketball fan. Bob and his wife, Patti, a neo natal intensive care nurse, also have been known to travel great distances to see Bruce Springsteen in concert.



Power of Our Supporters

The resources provided by our donors ensure that we can expand our capacity and reach our goals.



Profile Martha Tierney

The members of Common Cause's National Governing Board are a talented and accomplished group who contribute time, energy and funding to the organization. One

member who has stepped up many times is Martha Tierney, whose hard work and leadership has come at critical times for the organization.

Twice in recent years, Martha has agreed to serve as interim chairwoman of the organization when unexpected changes in the board occurred, taking on new responsibilities in addition to her demanding "day job" as an attorney in Denver.

Not only has Martha been a stellar member of our national board, but she has been a key board member on one of our most successful state organizations, Colorado Common Cause, and she has led key legal battles on reform issues in the state

Martha is a partner in the law firm Kelly Garnsey Hubbell + Lass, where her practice emphasizes dispute resolution through mediation and litigation in state and federal courts, as well as administrative agencies. She specializes in election law, civil rights law, family law, and commercial litigation, including contractual, construction, and media disputes.

She graduated from Colorado College and Vermont Law School. Martha is the mother of young twin boys, and with her husband Jonathan she enjoys spending her free time skiing and hiking in the Colorado mountains.

IT PAYS TO ADVERTISE

In 1970, Natalie Joslin read an ad in *The Providence Journal* that changed her future - and the future of Common Cause.

Natalie was one of two dozen Rhode Islanders to respond to Common Cause founder John Gardner's original appeal. And, as Common Cause's 40th anniversary approaches, it's time to celebrate our founding mothers and fathers like Natalie.

With the disastrous Democratic convention of 1968 and the killings at Kent State University in Ohio weighing heavily, Natalie was concerned about the future of the nation and was instantly, in her words, "hot to trot" when she read about an organization willing to work for fundamental change.

After founding the Rhode Island chapter of Common Cause, Natalie started her own business but returned several years later to attend an annual meeting. Disappointed by the turnout, she turned loose her entrepreneurial skills and spirit to build Common Cause.

The result was the transition of the Rhode Island membership base from "who's here?" to "who's who" via the creation of a model major donor program.

It began with Natalie's CAMPAIGN 500 in 1991, the first in Common Cause history built around peer-to-peer person contact rather than direct mail. She recruited 50 "captains," each committed to raising a minimum of \$500. The breakthrough campaign raised \$50,000. That led to the creation of an Advisory Council that, with several local board members, took responsibility for major donor fund raising.

The Council, which includes some of the most respected philanthropists in Rhode Island, is still true to Natalie's vision of a cadre of high-powered networkers, working with the local board, and leveraging their personal relationships into major donor dollars for Common Cause. In September, for example, a Governing Board member made a \$10,000 match if the office could raise \$5,000 in 24 hours. The Advisory Council and board members met the challenge to get us to \$160,000 that activated another \$27,500 match.

So we celebrate Natalie Joslin and all our "givers and getters" who help provide the resources crucial to making Common Cause the leading good government organization in America.





Power of Our Voices

Here's what our members, activists, staff and volunteers are saying, in their own words.

We want to hear from you.

Email your thoughts, a one-liner or your own op-ed, to grassroots@commoncause.org.

LOOK FOR US ONLINE!

Join our ongoing discussion on **Common Blog** www.commonblog.org

We're on Facebook! Look for Common Cause, join the group. And join our state groups in Connecticut, Maryland and Colorado.

And watch our YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/user/CommonCauseEthics.

After reading one of our reports, a supporter wrote:

Please pass on my thanks to the entire Common Cause organization for the superb article, "Ask Yourself Why... They Didn't See This Coming." This helped me understand the background of the problem and the various attempts and failures to correct the practices that led us to this moment. Thanks. At this point, I am thinking that we need to throw out the entire Congress and start fresh. The thought that the members of Congress would vote into law campaign finance reform or any other measure that restricts their abilities to gain financially from their position is ludicrous. Greed for power and money rule! All the talk about the need for a bail-out makes it appear that Congress was totally unaware of the workings of an evil banking and financial services industry. I am so thoroughly disgusted. Thank God for organizations such as Common Cause that put the truthful background before us.

Best regards,
Sue North, PA

Note: You can find the report on our website www.commoncause.org - click on Research Center.

In response to our Recapture the Flag campaign, an activist emailed us:

This is absolutely the best news - I am unemployed, and unable to donate, but you have all my support, will certainly sign anything that will be helpful now and in the future. - Gail Pontuto, PA

"I had been afraid that Common Cause had lost its effectiveness ... but now I am very reassured and so I am enclosing my cheque for ten thousand dollars to help with the important work you are doing."
-Longtime member Crawford Gordon, Wyoming - after reading about passage of ethics legislation

Volunteer Profile Dwight Cramer



Since its founding in 1970, Common Cause has had volunteers coming into the office, calling activists and playing other crucial roles in the organization.

One of the longest-serving and most respected is Dwight Cramer, who has been a member of our volunteer corps, the Washington Connection, since the early 1980s. Dwight joined Common Cause in 1974 while in Taiwan in the foreign service and starting coming in as a volunteer several years later after retiring.

Dwight, a resident of Maryland, has also worked with Common Cause Maryland for a number of years, including a stint as chair of the organization. Volunteer leaders are a key to the success of many of our state organizations.

A volunteer for 27 years and still going strong, Dwight says, "It's a pleasure to work for something I believe in and where I can make a difference."

Correction: In the last newsletter, we printed the wrong name for one of our valuable and beloved volunteers: Marguerite Rawdon Smith.



"Watergate showed more strengths in our system than weaknesses. ... The whole country did take part in quite a genuine sense in passing judgment on Richard Nixon." - Archibald Cox, Common Cause Chair 1981-1992



PROTECT THE STUDENT VOTE!

This historic election is going to produce a record turnout among young student voters. But these young voters often face unique obstacles to voting, especially if they are attending college away from home.

waiting in line and will have phones available for students to contact civil rights lawyers on call to immediately address instances where students may be illegally prevented from voting.

This campaign is being launched in partnership with the Student Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs), Fair Elections Legal Network, and the Lawyer's Committee on Civil Rights. This election is going to produce a record turnout among young voters and Common Cause/Democracy Matters will be working to ensure that every voice is heard on November 4th.

Common Cause's first Democracy Matters youth initiative – Protect the Student Vote! – is active in several states across the country organizing get-out-the-vote campaigns to educate student voters about their voting rights and provide them with the necessary resources to protect this fundamental right. On Election Day, students will set up voting rights booths at polling places that are expected to receive a high student voter turnout. They will be handing out voting rights cards to students



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“Democracy works when people claim it as their own.”

— Bill Moyers,
from his book
Moyers on Democracy