

GOVERNING POWER

by Dan McGrath, Harmony Goldberg and Grassroots Power Program

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GOVERNING

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POWER

00. INTRODUCTION

01. DEFINING GOVERNING POWER [09]

02. GOVERNING POWER STRATEGY [23]

03. A PATH TOWARD GOVERNING POWER [46]

Why Governing Power? [06]

1.1 **Winning and sustaining power in the six arenas of decision-making** [14]

1.2 **Shifting the power structure of governance** [19]

In Summary:
Defining Governing Power [22]

2.1 **Five big shifts in how we approach our fights** [26]

2.1.1 From a target-focused power analysis to a governing power analysis [28]

2.1.2 From short-term campaigns to a long-term governing agenda [30]

2.1.3 From tactical messaging to leveraging narrative to govern [34]

2.1.4 From winning one-off elections to developing independent political infrastructure and co-governing [36]

2.1.5 From narrow base building to building majoritarian power [40]

In Summary:
Governing Power Strategy [45]

3.1 **Minnesota Alignment Tables: A Case Study** [47]

In Summary:
A Path Toward Governing Power [59]

Table of Contents

APPENDIX A: ARENAS OF GOVERNING POWER CASE STUDIES [62]

I.	Electoral Arena: Million Voters Project (MVP)	[63]
II.	Legislative Arena: The Congressional Progressive Caucus	[65]
III.	Administrative Arena: Our Minnesota Future	[67]
IV.	Judicial and Constitutional Arena: The American Constitution Society (ACS) and the Florida Voting Rights Restoration for Felons Initiative	[69]
V.	Worldview Arena: The Sunrise Movement	[71]
VI.	Economic Arena: California Fast Food Council	[73]

APPENDIX B: GOVERNING POWER STRATEGY CASE STUDIES [75]

I.	Rise Up Colorado: From a Target-Focused Analysis to a Governing Power Analysis	[76]
II.	Million Voters Project (MVP): Extending the Strategic Time Horizon and Making Power Building as Important as the Win	[80]
III.	Invest in Our New York (IONY) Campaign: From Tactical Messaging to Leveraging Narrative to Govern	[84]
IV.	Working Families Party (WFP): Developing Independent Political Infrastructure	[86]
V.	Harold Washington for Mayor: Building Base to Lead a Constituency and Building	[88]

REFERENCES	[94]
HIGHLIGHTED ORGANIZATIONS	[95]
CREDITS & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	[97]

00.

INTRODUCTION

Why Governing Power?

Over the years, as organizers, we have seen the vast space between the campaigns that we wage every day and the larger dreams that our people dream. And as we continue to experiment with different approaches to our political fights that get us closer to bridging that gap, we have learned first-hand what many of you already know—we can't win all of what our people need by securing small changes within this oppressive system as it is structured. The only way that we change this system is if we, as a movement, can take control and win what we call “governing power.”

WHY GOVERNING POWER?

Because we recognize that if we want to move beyond our role as protesters, and into the role of decision-makers who can meet the needs of our communities, we will need to win and control the power of government. This means both controlling the government as it is and creating new systems and structures of governance.

It is a long-term project to get to this level of power. Even though the current power structure has some significant weaknesses, the conditions do not yet exist for a rupture that would wipe racial capitalism clean away and replace it with a more humane system. The only way we win the ability to realize our dreams is if we take on the daunting work of defining something better and organizing the scale of popular power needed to make it happen. This process, of both gaining control over and transforming the government, will need to happen piece by piece, with steps backwards and leaps forward over the course of years, until we make our way to governing power.

The good news is that more organizers today are thinking farther into the future about what we want

to achieve and how we are going to achieve it. We have discovered that the path toward more power, and more lasting kinds of power, requires us to vastly expand the scale of our work, to build deep alliances, to engage in electoral politics and to integrate narrative into all that we do. It also requires us to reorient our organizing toward our dreams, and to honestly assess the power we have and the power we are up against. Only then can we develop a “governing power strategy” that gets us from the difficult realities of today to our visions for a more democratic and equitable future.

This paper is divided into four sections. First, it offers a **definition of governing power**. Perhaps not surprisingly, it does not describe governing power as a static destination, but rather as the North star of power that we are working toward. Second, this paper lays out **governing power strategy**: the process of organizing to build governing power over time, including an exploration of the 5 big shifts we need to make, as organizers, in our current approaches to our political fights to engage that strategy effectively. Third, this paper offers an **in-depth case study** that describes the work that Minnesota’s organizers undertook in the early 2010s to build toward governing power. Fourth, this paper offers an appendix of case studies related to the arenas of governing power and governing power strategy.

1. DEFINING GOVERNING POWER

1.1	Winning and sustaining power in the six arenas of decision-making	[14]
1.2	Shifting the power structure of governance	[19]
	In Summary: Defining Governing Power	[22]

WHAT IS GOVERNING POWER?

Governing power is the ability to [1] win and sustain power within multiple arenas of decision-making so as to [2] shift the power structure of governance and [3] establish a new common sense of governing.

(That is, a new governing paradigm that replaces neoliberalism.)

Said another way: To win governing power, we need the **capacity to design, drive demand for, legislate, enforce and defend a structural reform agenda that serves the interests of our people** (rather than the wealthy few). This requires us to reshape the structure of the government itself, so that it can advance democratic control, redistribution and reparation.

It is important to note that governing power can be achieved or exercised by a range of political forces to accomplish different governing agendas. The most recent governing paradigm of neoliberalism came to dominance through the intentional, strategic work of the conservative, corporate establishment. That paradigm or “common sense of governance,” is now in a moment of deep crisis, brought on by climate change, changing international conditions, and extreme inequality, which it has largely created. But what comes out of this crisis is not inevitable. Those in power now are already mobilizing political projects that ultimately aim to keep power in the hands of the wealthy few—whether in the form of an updated version of the neoliberal agenda or in the right’s advancement of a white nationalist agenda. Our job as organizers is to forge a new governing paradigm that reflects deep democracy, sustainability and equity.

What do we mean by a new “governing paradigm”?

A governing paradigm is the dominant political framework of a given era that structures the “common sense” of how government, the economy and society operate. Different eras in our history have been governed by different paradigms.

In the 1930s, the free market paradigm of the Gilded Age drove the economy into the historic crisis of the Great Depression. The free market paradigm operated on the assumption that minimally-regulated industrial growth would strengthen the American economy and establish its dominance on the world stage. Labor unions and popular movements organized powerfully in response, and they won a shift in the paradigm of governance towards what we know today as the “New Deal.” The New Deal paradigm was based on the theory that government regulation and investment in infrastructure and social programs were needed to maintain a strong capitalist economy.



← Women picketing in Greensboro, Georgia [1941]



➤ Franklin Roosevelt explaining the New Deal programs [1932]



← Organizer with CTUL
[2022]

But just as those victories were starting to make real improvements in our society, a new paradigm emerged and became dominant: neoliberalism. Neoliberalism draws on some of the core assumptions of the free market paradigm of the Gilded Age, and argues that capitalist economies perform best when they are unregulated and when the redistribution of wealth and power is minimal. Over the last decade and a half, this paradigm has gone into what seems likely to be a terminal crisis. There is now space to fight for a new governing paradigm, but it is far from clear what paradigm will emerge in its place. The forces that are able to win governing power in this context are the forces that will determine what governing paradigm comes next.

1.2

**WINNING
AND
SUSTAINING
POWER
WITHIN
THE
MULTIPLE
ARENAS
OF
DECISION-
MAKING**

It is easy to recognize the power relations at play when decisions are made in the public sphere that affect our lives are often made in the visible places of government: in city hall or the town council, in a courtroom, at the ballot box and more. But there are less visible arenas that seem more neutral or distant, where power relations *also* shape the decisions that are made about our lives. Understanding the relationship between these arenas is necessary if we are going to attain governing power.

Changing States: A Framework for Progressive Governance, produced by Manuel Pastor, Jennifer Ito and Madeline Wander, offers a useful reference which we build on and adapt in this paper. It suggests that there are six arenas where governing power is won and exercised: the electoral arena, the legislative arena, the administrative arena, the judicial and constitutional arena, the arena of worldview (which appears in the original framework as the communications arena) and the economic arena (which appears in the original framework as the corporate arena).

Each arena relates to the others, and each has the ability to reinforce or undermine the progress we hope to achieve in another. Below, you'll find a chart that examines and builds on the six arenas: what they are, what our efforts to build power within them typically look like and what organizing at the scale needed to win governing power within them will require.

CHART: Building Governing Power Within the Multiple Arenas of Decision-Making. This chart builds on *Changing States: A Framework for Progressive Governance* (Pastor, Ito, and Wander 2016), with the intent of making it more actionable for organizers building power at the state level.



BUILDING GOVERNING POWER

Within the Multiple Arenas of Decision-Making

Arena of Decision-making	Definition	What it takes to build power?
ELECTORAL ARENA	The electoral arena is where voters have a direct say in who is elected to public office or where voters directly approve or reject laws by referendum.	To build power in the electoral arena , we can educate and turn out voters in support of candidates who share our values, and we can run referendum campaigns. We can also recruit and develop candidates from our base who are committed to our agenda.
LEGISLATIVE ARENA	The legislative arena is where elected leaders convene to create or change laws.	To build power in the legislative arena , we can partner with legislators to pass policies that shift wealth and power and to create new systems and institutions that increase democratic participation. This includes building grassroots lobbying capacities, policy expertise and public pressure campaigns. This also means taking a strategic approach to co-governing with elected champions, and organizing caucuses (or teams) of elected leaders to advance our agenda through strategic negotiations.
ADMINISTRATIVE ARENA	The administrative arena is where the directives of the electoral and legislative arenas are transformed into actionable rules and where the process of implementation is shaped.	To build power in the administrative arena , we can develop knowledge of the legal parameters and bureaucratic structures related to the policies we are fighting for in order to bring popular political muscle into the debate around how they are implemented.
JUDICIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA	The judicial and constitutional arena of decision-making is where laws and rules are interpreted and applied.	To build power in the judicial and constitutional arena , we can engage in strategic litigation to force the application of regulations on large corporations, monitoring the decisions of a particular court, or training and developing judges to be seated on the bench.
WORLDVIEW ARENA	Worldview is an arena of decision-making where different ideological and political interests deploy narratives to shape popular values, beliefs and what we come to understand as "common sense."	To build power in the arena of worldview, we can unmask dominant narratives and expose their contradictions. We can lift up narratives that reflect our beliefs and animate people to unite with each other toward solutions that are reflected in our agenda.
ECONOMY ARENA	The economy is the arena where our wages, work-life and consumer choices are decided.	To build power in the economic arena , we can wage campaigns to organize workers into unions to collectively bargain. We can also wage policy campaigns that expand worker control of the economy, and that empower the government to reign in corporate power.

BUILDING GOVERNING POWER

Within the Multiple Arenas of Decision-Making

Arena of Decision-making <small>[Arenas of Governing Power Case Studies]</small>	What it takes to govern in this arena ?	
	To actually govern:	What becomes possible if we govern in this arena:
<p>ELECTORAL ARENA</p> <p>Million Voters Project [p.63]</p>	<p>In the electoral arena, we would need to have built a majoritarian bloc of voters that can decide the outcome of key elections. In other words, our voters are the majority bloc, and we win major elections and referendum campaigns.</p>	<p>With a majority bloc of voters and the ability to win referendum campaigns, we are able to advance an agenda year over year that shifts the balance of power from the wealthy few to the people.</p>
<p>LEGISLATIVE ARENA</p> <p>The Congressional Progressive Caucus [p.65]</p>	<p>In the legislative arena, we would need to have built sufficient electoral power to have our elected champions be leading the dominant caucuses in both legislative houses, and we would need real influence in the executive branch.</p>	<p>We are able to advance a structural reform agenda that shifts power year over year, and that expands the definition of what is politically possible. Examples of policies that shift power include campaign finance and redistricting reforms, voting rights expansions, raising taxes and redistributing public resources equitably, or a multitude of tactics that rein in corporate power and expand worker and community control.</p>
<p>ADMINISTRATIVE ARENA</p> <p>Our Minnesota Future [p.67]</p>	<p>In the administrative arena we would need to have sufficient influence with elected executives to appoint trusted leaders who are allied with power-building organizations and who have the skills and expertise to shape policy, to effectively implement it and to enforce the laws and regulations around it.</p>	<p>The policies that we pass in the legislative arena or through referendums are made real in practice. They are both utilized and enforced: reining in corporate power, advancing the power of working people and ensuring democratic rights.</p>
<p>JUDICIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA</p> <p>The American Constitution Society (ACS) and the Florida Voting Rights Restoration for Felons Initiative [p.69]</p>	<p>In the judicial and constitutional arena, we would need to be able to place enough judges on the bench (via elections or appointments) who share our agenda to shift jurisprudence.</p>	<p>We are able to shape how laws are interpreted and ruled on. We have a court system that reliably penalizes and deters bad behavior. We may even have the ability to pass constitutional amendments.</p>
<p>WORLDVIEW ARENA</p> <p>The Sunrise Movement [p.71]</p>	<p>In the arena of worldview, we would need to establish a new popular “common sense” that reflects our deeper beliefs and values.</p>	<p>With this new common sense, our new governing paradigm is seen as the obvious and only reasonable approach to governance. We have reclaimed the role of government, called the concentration of wealth into question and advanced a deep commitment to multi-racial democracy.</p>
<p>ECONOMY ARENA</p> <p>California Fast Food Council [p.73]</p>	<p>The economic arena would require us to have a large proportion of the workforce organized into unions, and to have sufficient electoral and legislative power to radically extend democratic control over the economy.</p>	<p>We win democratic control over the sorts of economic decisions that have historically been considered ‘private,’ we ensure the government is the entity meeting the public’s basic economic and social needs (like health care or education) instead of profit-driven corporations, and we create new structures that facilitate worker and consumer control. Workers have the ability to use workplace action or government intervention to set standards for wages and working conditions across entire industries.</p>

It is critical that organizers understand these six arenas of decision-making so that we understand how they intersect and can prepare to build power across them. Building a campaign to win a policy, lawsuit or election is an important first step toward governing power. But the problem is that for many of us, it's often the only step that we are prepared to take. After we "win," we are eager to move onto the next fight when the real battle is just beginning. A legislative win can be undermined if we don't pay attention to the administrative arena, where it is implemented. A corporate campaign can be undone by a judge's decree if we don't have power in the judicial and constitutional arena. Sustaining what we win so that we can shift the structures of power is what governing power is all about.



1.3

SHIFTING

T H E

POWER

STRUCTURE

O F

GOVERNANCE

Building the power to win in these intersecting arenas of decision-making is a crucial aspect of building governing power. It is the art of fighting on the terrain of governance as it is today. But our ambitions are greater than wielding power within the system as it is. We also want the power to create new systems that can serve our communities better: more democratic forms of government, more popular control over the economy, new forms of jurisprudence, even a new Constitution.

One example of what it looks like to reimagine our relationships with structures of power comes from fast food workers in California who, in 2022, organized and won a statewide council made up of workers, business representatives and government officials to set higher standards for the half a million people working for the industry’s largest chains. The workers and elected officials who made this possible could have chosen to focus their efforts exclusively on building the power that they would need to collectively bargain with one fast food restaurant at a time. Instead, they built a new structure in the form of a 10-person council that is empowered by the state legislature to set standards across the industry for wages, worker health and safety, sexual harassment, wage theft, employer retaliation and more. This has set fast food workers up to operate at an entirely different scale of power, giving them access to an important tool to combat low-road business practices while setting a more equitable and more dignified floor for workers and businesses in the industry. Corporate forces are well aware of the risk this structure poses to their agenda, and they have already introduced new legislation that, if won, would roll back the council’s power.



↑ Sacramento, CA. In efforts of increasing power to fast food workers [2022]

That's what makes embedding popular democracy into government so foundational to the concept of governing power.



Shifting the power structure of governance means *ensuring that the people who are closest to the problem have the power to put the solutions on the table themselves.*



This task—of making decision-making power accessible to as many of our people as possible—requires elected and appointed leaders to not only see themselves as the agents of change, but to also work to structurally shift power into the hands of the communities they serve.

In Summary:

GOVERNING POWER

Governing power is the ability to establish a new common sense around governance that structures how government, the economy and society operate and interact.

To do that, we need to be able to win and hold power in six interconnected arenas of decision-making: the **electoral arena**, the **legislative arena**, the **administrative arena**, the **judicial and constitutional arena**, the **arena of worldview** and the **economic arena**.

We also need to *develop new systems and structures of governance* that bring democracy much closer to home, giving our people the tools and power they need to solve their problems together.

The path to **governing power** is not well-paved or well-marked. It's a winding path that requires steps forward, backward and to the side. How we traverse that trail is called governing power strategy. ↗

2. GOVERNING POWER STRATEGY

2.1	Five big shifts in how we approach our fights	[26]
2.1.1	From a target-focused power analysis to a governing power analysis	[28]
2.1.2	From short-term campaigns to a long-term governing agenda	[30]
2.1.2.a	Extending the Strategic Time Horizon	[32]
2.1.2.b	Making Power-Building as Important as the Win	[33]
2.1.2.c	Embedding Power-Building and Enforcement into Policies	[33]
2.1.3	From tactical messaging to leveraging narrative to govern	[34]
2.1.4	From winning one-off elections to developing independent political infrastructure and co-governig	[36]
2.1.5	From narrow base building to building majoritarian power	[40]
2.1.5.a	Building Base to Lead a Constituency	[41]
2.1.5.b	Building a Multi-Racial Working Class Majority	[42]
2.1.5.c	Forging Alliances to Change Political Conditions	[42]
	In Summary: Governing Power Strategy	[45]

GOVERNING POWER STRATEGY

Governing power strategy is a long-term, integrated approach to organizing, campaigning, movement infrastructure and narrative that is oriented toward winning the scope and scale of power necessary to control the levers of the government. Governing power strategy requires a series of significant shifts in how organizing and political work are currently done, including [1] the ability to exercise and win power in multiple arenas of decision-making and [2] a stronger integration of our work to win victories, build power and sustain our wins.

Winning concrete changes in people’s lives is at the heart of the craft of organizing, as is the work of building power. But, too often, there is a chasm between the work to deliver policy and electoral victories and the work to build power over time. Sometimes, this manifests as a division of labor between policy specialists and electoral operatives, whose job is to “bring home the win,” and organizers, whose job is to build power. Other times, it shows up as a campaign-oriented approach to building power, where after building the power we need to win a given campaign, we set that power down and take up the project of building new power to win a different campaign—losing leaders, alliances, infrastructure and more, in the process.

We need to adopt a more dynamic approach to the relationship between building power, winning campaigns and sustaining our victories that shifts both *how we fight* and *what we fight for*.

The theory for these shifts in strategy and practice builds on the [*Three Faces of Power*](#) (Healey and Hinson 2013) framework, which considers power in three dimensions:

1. Power to Win Demands by organizing people and resources for direct political action.
2. Power to Drive the Agenda by building movement infrastructure.
3. Power to Shape Common Sense by making meaning on the terrain of ideology and worldview.

2.1

**FIVE
BIG
SHIFTS
IN
HOW
WE
APPROACH
OUR
FIGHTS**

There are 5 critical shifts in how we approach our political fights that are needed to advance governing power strategy:



- 1. From a Target-focused Power Analysis to a Governing Power Analysis**
- 2. From Short-Term Campaigns to a Longterm Governing Agenda**
 - a. Extending the Strategic Time Horizon
 - b. Making Power-Building as Important as the Win
 - c. Embedding Power-Building and Enforcement into Policies
- 3. From Tactical Messaging to Leveraging Narrative to Govern**
- 4. From Winning One-Off Elections to Developing Independent Political Infrastructure and Co-governing**
- 5. From Narrow Base Building to Building Majoritarian Power**
 - a. Building Base to Lead a Constituency
 - b. Building a Multi-racial, Working Class Majority
 - c. Forging Alliances to Change the Political Conditions

2.1.1

**FROM
TARGET-
FOCUSED
POWER
ANALYSIS**

**TO
GOVERNING
POWER
ANALYSIS**

In our campaigning, we are used to doing power analyses to identify a target and to map the relationships that influence that target. This tool is essential to developing a winning campaign strategy, but to really understand who governs, we need to identify the social forces that give our targets their power in the first place. We need to learn more about who is standing next to them, who is cheering them on and whose direct or indirect influence shapes the context for the decisions the target makes.

The work of researching and analyzing who governs in your state is a critical step in building strategic alignment with your allies. If there is disagreement about who your opponents are and how they operate, it will be impossible to create strategies to win campaigns, let alone to govern. On the other hand, if we have a shared analysis, we can begin the work of exercising our power more effectively today in order to change what is politically possible tomorrow.

The two fundamental questions of a governing power analysis are: “Who sets the agenda?” and “Who benefits from it?” While the governor, a senator or another public figure might serve as the face of that agenda, we want to know who put them in office to begin with, and what those people’s goals are.

In some states, it might be a set of powerful CEOs who direct the work of think tanks or political action committees. In other states, it might be a major employer that drives government’s decisions around tax policy and environmental regulation. Either way, the forces that put elected leaders into office always do so to advance or protect their self-interest. We need to understand who those forces are, what infrastructure they use and what they ultimately want.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to conducting a governing power analysis. But in order to better understand their political terrain, organizers can ask themselves questions about who holds extreme wealth in their state and how those people and corporations are connected to each other. What think tanks, advocacy groups and political entities do they fund? What can you understand about the extremely wealthy by looking at their agendas? This tool can also map out who is hurt by the exploitation that the concentrated wealth in their state requires, especially as workers and consumers across the dominant sectors of their state’s economy.

A governing power analysis asks us to understand the key elements of our opponents’ agenda, to examine the forces on the left and the right that could wield greater power in our state if they were organized and aligned, and to identify the potential wedges between our opponents that could divide and weaken them. And it helps us get clearer on the key demographics we will need to focus our organizing and legislative efforts on if we are going to wield a greater level of control over state policy.

See Case Study: *Rise Up Colorado: From a Target-Focused Power Analysis to a Governing Power Analysis* [p.76]

2.1.2

**FROM
SHORT-
TERM
CAMPAIGNS**

**TO
LONG-TERM
GOVERNING
AGENDA**

In order to build governing power, we need to move from waging short-term campaigns to developing long-term governing agendas. A long-term governing agenda is not a step-by-step playbook that can tell you exactly how to win governing power. Rather, it recognizes that the political terrain is continually evolving and that, as a result, our specific campaign plans need to adjust as opportunities and barriers present themselves. A long-term governing agenda encompasses three elements that point the way toward the transformation of government and the economy: [1] it extends our strategic time horizon, [2] it makes power-building as important as our wins and [3] it embeds power-building and enforcement into the policies we fight for.

Long-term governing agenda:



I. Extending the Strategic Time Horizon

Often, even if we have a vision of a radically more just society, we tend to create plans and agendas in two-year to four-year increments that are tied to the electoral or legislative calendar. That means that we are set up to fight for what’s already on the table, using the power that we already have. We are not making plans to reset the table: to greatly increase our own power and to sustain what we hope to win.

A long-term governing agenda extends our strategic time horizon by laying out **stepping stone campaigns** that may take 1-2 years to accomplish and that lay the groundwork to win larger **milestones**, like shifts in power, narrative change, or building infrastructure for a more substantial fight in the future. As organizers, we strategize around short-term campaigns all the time, but we tend to think about these campaigns in terms of what they can win for us immediately, not in terms of the transformation that those wins could set us up to achieve years down the line.

Grassroots Power Project’s [Long-Term Agenda](#) (Hinson 2019) is a useful framework for mapping the progression of issue campaigns and power-building gains over time. It helps groups in an alliance orient their work toward achieving transformational goals that extend 20 years or more into the future.

The Long-Term Governing Agenda asks us to evaluate what big structural reforms have the potential to fundamentally transfer wealth and power to as many of our people as possible, which means we have to think through the milestone reforms that we could win as we work our way to those larger shifts. This also means thinking through the stepping stone campaigns we can take on in the next 1-2 years that would get us to our milestone reforms.

Long-term Agenda (Hinson 2019)



II. Making power-building as important as the win.

Whether we are talking about creating new systems or passing more significant policies that pave the way for bigger victories, a long-term governing agenda also makes a **plan to build power year over year** so that bigger breakthroughs become possible.

This means that rather than relying on the most expedient path to the win, the way that we structure our legislative, electoral and corporate campaigns has to center the question of how we make the power that we build more durable, year after year. This can look like embedding goals for growth, base building and new alliances within our campaign plans, and creating structures that keep people engaged after the current campaign concludes. It can also look like using our campaigns to push forward a specific narrative that will help to consolidate and align different organizations and constituencies. Applying a governing power orientation to our organizing means we must think about who will use the policies we want to pass. We must consider how they can be organized into coalitions that can, in turn, take on the next stepping stone fight.

III. Embedding power-building and enforcement into policies.

Lastly, a governing power agenda has a **clear plan to sustain the policies and power that we win**. We must plan to run past the finish line of securing the policy victory we want and into another race entirely—one where we implement, utilize and enforce it. We need to pay attention to not only who will benefit from that particular policy, but how the use of the policy might build and align new constituencies. And we have to learn to put as much popular political muscle behind using and cementing our campaign victories as we do behind winning those victories in the first place.

We can develop a practice of thinking about the “end” of a campaign at its beginning, by asking ourselves questions like: When we win this campaign, how can we take on the work of enforcement as an opening to build more power? How can we organize the beneficiaries of this victory as members so that we build more power? Can we embed other mechanisms that create organizing opportunities within or across constituencies? (Sabeel Rahman’s [Governing to Build Power](#) is a rich resource in this vein.) We know that our corporate opposition will immediately get to work to roll back our victories, so embedding the future work of power-building into our campaign victories is one of the core tools we must prioritize if we are going to move our agenda forward.

See Case Studies: **Million Voters Project**: *Extending the Strategic Time Horizon and Making Power-Building as Important as the Win* [p.80] and “*The Creative Methods Workers Are Using to Stop Bosses’ Abuse*” (Scott 2022) about the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers \(CIW\)](#) [embedding power-building and enforcement into policies](#).

2.1.3

**FROM
TACTICAL
MESSAGING**

**TO
LEVERAGING
NARRATIVE
TO GOVERN**

We only need to look at how the governing consensus of our country has changed over the last 50 years to see how much narrative, and therefore, power, can shift through deliberate political effort in the **worldview arena**. There once was a broad consensus that the wealthy should pay higher taxes than working people in order to pay for public infrastructure and a more robust safety net. But today, while our schools, health care system, and infrastructure crumble, politicians debate whether taxes can be raised on the wealthy at all. The very idea of the “common good,” and the role the government should play in defending it, has been racialized and devalued. In its place, the “market” has been raised up as the supreme solution to all of society’s problems, including the very inequality it has created. The narrative has clearly changed, and as a result, the political terrain has shifted.

As organizers, we need to do at least two things to exercise our power on the terrain of narrative. First, we need to deepen our ability to make meaning of the broader dynamics in the world around us. This means understanding and exposing the dominant narratives that benefit the 1% so that we can connect them to the policies and actions that harm us. It also means identifying the values and beliefs that we share within and across communities that inspire us to act and that align us ideologically. Through this process, we will get clearer about what we are fighting against and what we are fighting for.

Second, we need to invest more in the work to reshape the narratives of the larger world, especially around the economy, the role of government and race. This means more than coming up with the right words or frames for our political vision. It also means waging persistent, artistic and durable campaigns that repeat our narrative themes over and over to a wider public audience, until they are absorbed into the popular consciousness.

We see organizers and artists taking these steps in order to leverage narrative toward governing power strategy:

- Creating and prioritizing the time and space dedicated to political education and ideological formation within your organization and with your closest allies. Making political education a habit for organizational leadership, staff and members.
- Creating and prioritizing the space needed to strategize around the dominant narratives in your state and in society at large.
 - Developing a shared narrative with your closest partners that express your values. Finding ways to articulate that narrative in ways that are both creative and authentic to your constituency.
 - Building the capacity to launch campaigns where your narratives are repeated to reach people outside of your organization.

See Case Study: *Invest in Our New York (IONY) Campaign: From Tactical Messaging to Leveraging Narrative to Govern* [p.84]

2.1.4

FROM
WINNING
ONE
OFF
ELECTIONS

TO
DEVELOPING
INDEPENDENT
POLITICAL
INFRASTRUCTURE
AND
CO-GOVERNING

As organizers, we are so accustomed to resisting people in power that we often can't help but see people in public office as anything other than targets. In our electoral work, we've also tended to cede too much control to the Democratic Party and its independent affiliates, many of whose members do not share our deeper agenda. These dynamics mean that we can confuse access to people in positions of power with the ability to actually influence them. We need to step back and ask, "What kind of relationship do we want with our allies in public office in the first place? What is our role to play in the political process, and what is theirs?"

To advance our governing agenda, we cannot treat public officials solely as opponents. It's also insufficient to see anyone with "Democrat" behind their name as supportive of our goals. While we certainly need to be able to win general elections against conservatives, we also have to cultivate strong, mutually-accountable relationships with people in positions of authority who share our deeper agenda. This means remaining clear-eyed about the exceedingly limited political terrain that these public officials must navigate within the current system. →

The first step toward building these kinds of strategic relationships is to **create independent political** infrastructure that is controlled by, and accountable to, our organizations. That work starts by **engaging in direct electoral work, including forming 501(c)4s, political parties, political action committees and other formations** that are extensions of our organizational vision. While these structures must be legally separate from 501(c)3s or other strictly nonpartisan entities, they should still be part of the same overall strategy to build governing power.

Second, we need to **shift the role of our grassroots organizations from ground troops to strategists** in our electoral fights. Right now, many of the organizations that engage in direct electoral work rely on the Democratic Party or its independent affiliates, like America Votes, to recruit and develop candidates, manage voter data and determine what to say to voters. But while our short-term goals will sometimes overlap with theirs, at some point our long-term goals will diverge. The Democratic Party exists for the transactional purpose of electing Democrats to office. Period. We, on the other hand, exist to make and sustain transformational change. Instead of depending on the Democratic Party for strategy and infrastructure, **we will have to build the power to negotiate with it directly.** Our role is to create and maintain control of our own electoral strategy, to broker the relationships we need to reach our goals and to claim credit for our work so that we can build stronger, mutually-accountable relationships with public officials.

Third, we need to **adopt a co-governing approach when working with our elected officials.** Instead of treating election day as the moment of victory and the job of an elected official as “delivering” on our agenda, we can learn to include the tenure of our champion’s time in office in the timeline of what it will take to win our potential victory. That means that **we need to shed a deeply-held idea in community organizing that elected officials are separate from us as a movement.** We can do that by asking ourselves questions like, “If we elect this champion, how will we work together to advance our shared agenda? What is the political terrain our elected ally will find herself in and what can we do to help shape a more favorable terrain? What is her role as an elected official and what is our role as a community organization?”

To co-govern and build independent political infrastructure, organizers can take a number of steps, including:

- Assessing the track record, leadership, capacity and financial backing of your state’s Democratic party and other broad-based progressive political formations. Looking for openings to influence the Democratic party or to expose oppositional corporate forces who are working to influence them.
- Assessing the gaps in independent political infrastructure between your alignment table partners and filling them. Examples of infrastructure that might be needed include shared data infrastructure, narrative and communications capacity, research capacity and more.
- Asking strong leaders in your organization to run for public office.
- Supporting the elected officials you have chosen with research, communications, strong campaigns or administrative staff.
- Supporting the elected officials you have chosen in the process of building coalitions with other elected leaders. Staying responsive to the other capacities that they need to be successful once they are in office.

See Case Study: **Working Families Party:**
Developing Independent Political Infrastructure [p.86]

2.1.5

**FROM
NARROW
BASE
BUILDING**

**TO
BUILDING
MAJOR-
ITARIAN
POWER**

We cannot win, wield and sustain governing power without majorities. Yet, in our work as organizers, we often do not strive to build majoritarian power. To do so requires three shifts in our current approach:

- [I] Building base to lead a constituency
- [II] Building a multi-racial working class majority
- [III] Forging alliances to change the political conditions

I. Building Base to Lead a Constituency

A hard fact about our movement's approach to base building is that we do more mobilizing than organizing. As a result, we are nowhere near the scale of power we need to advance a governing agenda. Too often, an organizer recruits a grassroots volunteer to join an organization's campaign by asking them to speak on behalf of others or to fulfill a shift on the doors. Occasionally, they might be allowed to make minor decisions about the direction of the campaign itself. But at the conclusion of the campaign, the volunteers find another campaign to join and our organizing is back to square one. We don't hold onto our members, who are the basis of our organization's power.

Another limit on many of our organizing models is that we have often prioritized developing leaders as representative voices for our communities, rather than aiming to develop leaders who are organizing others in their communities to act effectively for change. As a result, we have built organizations that can advocate to people in positions of formal power, but we have not built the constituency-wide power we need to shift the terrain of power itself. A workers' organization that focuses on lobbying elected officials to change policy is operating in a different realm of power than a workers' organization that has built enough constituent power to determine who gets into office.

To shift toward building base to lead a constituency, organizers can take these steps:

Assessing your organization's reach into its constituency. How many people are in the constituency that you organize? What percentage of the constituency can your organization reach? What percentage of the constituency will reliably follow your organization into action?

Setting goals with your members for how many people they will organize and lead into action in concert with your organization's mission and campaigns.

II. Building a Multi-Racial Working Class Majority

As we strive to organize and lead our own constituencies, we also need to connect with other organizations and constituencies to build a multi-racial working class majority. While leading an entire constituency represents an almost unprecedented scale of power for most of our organizations, it is not nearly enough to win real governing power; that requires cross-constituency power with people of different racial, social, economic, gender and geographic backgrounds who see a common interest in working together.

It is no small feat, for example, to build power in both urban Black and Brown communities and in suburban and rural communities with poor and poor and working class white communities. But it will be necessary if we want to build lasting governing power at the state and federal level. Building a multi-racial working class majority that can decide electoral outcomes, establish new narratives and sustain our agenda means that many of us will have to set aside our instincts toward ideological and political purity in order to honor and overcome differences.

To shift toward building majoritarian power across constituencies, organizers can take these steps:

- Researching the demographics of your state and assessing what constituencies can add up to a governing majority.
 - Prioritizing campaigns that build new power, bring in new constituencies and foster cross-constituency relationships to grow.
 - Building alliances that enable your organization to develop a strategic division of labor to organize across constituencies and geographies.

III. Forging Alliances to Change Political Conditions

If we are going to build multi-constituency majoritarian power, we will need to consider building alliances that transcend the limits of issue coalitions. We often build these coalitions to demonstrate broad support for an issue or candidate and to win short-term victories. Organizations usually join them knowing that they will concede some amount of control and creativity in return for the increased impact that is possible when more allies step forward on a campaign they care about. Coalitions are often meant to navigate the existing political landscape, but they are rarely designed to change it.

In several states, longer-term strategic alignment processes have taken root, seeking to change the political terrain. These processes, or alignment tables, are made up of power-building organizations that represent different constituencies, and who share strategic analyses and practices for building popular power and winning campaigns. These tables are focused more on building power and shared infrastructure than they are on winning short-term outcomes. Alignment tables are a place where allies practice building political unity, develop shared power analysis, and envision and lead broader strategies that aggregate and expand power.

Alignment tables can play an important role in building a multi-racial working class majority voting bloc at a state level. Specifically, alignment tables provide a space for organizers who have built a deep base in their own constituencies to think about building a majoritarian bloc that transcends their constituency and geography. For example, power-building organizations that are rooted primarily in urban communities of color have used their alignment tables to develop a strategic division of labor to build bases in suburban communities of color or predominantly white, working class rural areas.

Two examples:

- [1] In **New York** state, the alignment table is made up of power-building organizations that are predominantly based in New York City, who share a theory of change that the power base for progressive change in the state is a combination of communities of color in the New York metropolitan regions together with communities of color in smaller cities across the state. The New York alignment table provided one space where these organizations could think together about complementary approaches to expansion into smaller cities in Long Island, the Hudson Valley, and Western and Central New York.
- [2] When the **Florida for All** alignment table started in 2014, their member organizations only had meaningful infrastructure in two urban areas: Miami and Orlando. They recognized that, if they were going to build towards governing power in the state, they needed to build power across issue areas, constituencies and geographic regions. So they invested in geographic expansion: Florida for All member organizations are now building bases in 35 of Florida's 67 counties, including Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville and Tampa as well as many rural counties. Additionally, the table invested in staffing for coalitions in six regions of the state (with two more on deck), allowing their alignment to have a locally attuned "micro-geographical" approach to its issue and electoral campaigns. Florida for All has also invested in building issue tables addressing criminal justice reform, housing justice, preemption, budgeting and revenue. Finally, the table has created several constituency tables to ensure that different communities can build cohesion and power, including a Black Alignment Group, Florida Para Todos (a Latino Constituency table), and an Asian and Pacific Islander table along with Faith in Florida's work to cohere faith leaders across the state and some efforts at building a table of youth organizations. This investment in building the infrastructure needed to build multi-constituency and multi-geography power is an important part of the power that the Florida for All table has built over the years.

Alignment tables look different in different places, but some common characteristics include:

- A small membership of select organizations that represent different constituencies and share strategic analyses and practices for building popular power and winning campaigns. Trust is at a premium, and power, credit and resources are negotiated and shared by members of the alignment table.
- There is a shared commitment to strengthening each member organization's capacity, and often intentional work is done to support or incubate emergent organizations, especially in under-resourced communities and sectors, such as Black, Indigenous, and youth organizing. There is also a diversity of organizational forms, such as 501c(3)s, 501c(4)s, PACs, LLCs, and volunteer organizations that allow the alignment to access the tools, resources and protections that it needs.
- The public leadership of alignment table members is seen as primary, over that of the table itself, and groups encourage each other to lead publicly. Some alignment tables are not even publicly-known entities.
- The short-term campaigns of alignment tables are designed to advance the table's transformative vision and to overcome the structural barriers that stand in the way.

See Case Study: **Harold Washington for Mayor**: *Building Base to Lead a Constituency and Building a Multi-racial Working Class Majority* [p.88]

In Summary:

GOVERNING POWER STRATEGY

Governing power strategy is a compass that points us toward winning the scope and scale of power necessary to control and transform the levers of the government. It changes how we fight by requiring us to integrate organizing, campaigning, movement infrastructure and narrative so that we win, build power and sustain our victories. To do so means that, as organizers, we need to reject the false choice of either “building power” or “campaigning to win.” We need to do both. It also means that we need to change what we fight for by embedding enforcement and power-building into the policies that we are fighting for.

3. A PATH TOWARD GOVERNING POWER.

3.1	Minnesota Alignment Tables: A Case Study	[46]
3.1.a	Forming Minnesotans for a Fair Economy (MFE)	[51]
3.1.b	MFE in Action	[53]
3.1.c	Targeting Target	[54]
3.1.d	MFE in the electoral arena	[56]
3.1.e	MFE in the legislative arena	[56]
3.1.f	Learning lessons: the path to co-governance	[56]
3.1.g	Minnesotans for a Fair Economy Evolves	[57]
	In Summary: Minnesota Alignment Table and a Path Towards Governing Powers	[59]

3.1

MINNESOTA

ALIGNMENT

TABLES:

A

CASE

STUDY



Organizers across the country have looked to the evolution of organizing in Minnesota over the last decade to think about how to orient toward governing power. While no one would claim that Minnesota’s power-building organizations achieved governing power in the state, their innovations in strategy, alliance-building, power analysis and working across different arenas of power does provide a helpful reference for others who are beginning to explore building governing power in their own context.

In 2011, organizers launched Minnesotans for a Fair Economy (MFE), which focused primarily on corporate campaigns. By 2012, the group had broadened its scope to statewide electoral and legislative work. By 2017-18, MFE had evolved into two new formations. One is an alliance of working class power-building organizations of color called [Tending the Soil](#). The other had a broader membership than MFE and a goal to build a co-governing relationship with the state’s next governor. This formation was named [Our Minnesota Future](#).

The nucleus of Minnesotans for a Fair Economy was comprised of seven organizations:



Organizers with NOC gathered outside the for-\$15 minimum wage [2016]

Seven Nucleus Organizations of Minnesotans for a Fair Economy



Three SEIU Locals



Local 26



Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa



Local 284

→ Three SEIU Locals: [Local 26](#) (private sector janitors, security guards and window cleaners), Healthcare Minnesota (now named [Healthcare Minnesota & Iowa](#), representing workers in health care and home care), and Local 284 (public school workers).



ISIAIH Faith in Democracy



Faith in Minnesota

→ [ISIAIH](#) is a multi-racial statewide faith-based organization with an affiliated c(4) called [Faith in Minnesota](#)



TakeAction Minnesota

→ [TakeAction Minnesota](#), a statewide multi-issue, multi-constituency organization of institutional and individual members, with a focus on electoral politics and state legislation.



Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (CTUL)

→ [Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha](#), a workers' center with a strong corporate analysis, primarily made up of Latinx and Black low-wage workers.



Neighborhoods Organizing for Change (NOC)

→ Black-led direct action community organization. NOC folded as an organization in 2017.

Forming Minnesotans for a Fair Economy

SEIU’s local affiliates took the lead in organizing the groups under the banner of Minnesotans for a Fair Economy when they decided to share the resources that they received through SEIU International’s Fight for a Fair Economy campaign. It’s important to underline how crucial and unusual this was. SEIU’s international organization offered its local affiliates millions of dollars which they could control within the parameters of the national campaign. In nearly all of the 17 cities targeted by FFE, locals used these resources to run a campaign or to start a new organization that they controlled. In Minnesota, SEIU’s locals decided not only to offer substantial grants to its local partners but also to share decision-making power over how those resources were allocated.

MFE’s strategy was to synchronize the different campaigns that each of the groups were leading around common “compression points” so that they could more effectively move their targets through public action. To do this, the groups had to identify and share their campaign goals, targets and timelines with each other. They looked for ways that they could mutually benefit from working together on bigger public fights, including the use of direct action skills that were familiar to CTUL, NOC and Local 26 but were newer to some of the other groups.



MFE’s early meetings were different from typical coalition meetings; **the groups were not there just to win another campaign, but to get stronger** and to see that the other groups at the table got stronger, too. The conversations weren’t only about what they wanted to win. They were also about what they wanted to build— inside each organization and across organizations. This was a key reason that the collective invested heavily in CTUL and NOC. These organizations were newer, smaller and based in communities of color, and had equal decision-making authority around resources, strategy and tactics. The other more established groups, which were mostly white-led, made this dynamic a priority because they knew they could not get far if they were not aligned with Black and Latinx communities for political action. This was an early step toward building **majoritarian power**.

MFE’s resources were spent in two ways. First, significant general operating grants were made to each group in the alignment. The groups used those resources to expand their capacity as well as to fund existing campaigns that supported the overall goals of MFE’s work. Second, the groups agreed that they would be more effective if they had staff that could be flexibly deployed to different campaigns across the alignment at peak moments. They used MFE resources to build a “mobile team” of



six to eight researchers, organizers and communicators. The size of this mobile team, combined with the experience of its director-level staff, added significant capacity to the alignment and was able to offer strategic leadership to the campaigns it supported.

The MFE alignment operated at **three important levels** that deepened the connections between the organizations. The first level was that of **institutional leadership**, where executive directors and principal officers met to negotiate resource decisions. Practically, this meant the groups made decisions together about how they would spend the substantial resources that SEIU's national organization had invested in the alignment, including decisions about how to direct the work of a mobile team. Second, **organizing directors and other staff leaders** met to devise and operationalize strategy. This was where the nitty-gritty of planning and tactics were negotiated. At the third level, the **members and constituent leaders** of the groups engaged in strategic analysis and political formation, and executed major strategies. MFE developed leadership schools for its members, and when planning a week of action, 20-40 member-leaders would be asked to play leading roles in executing the week's cascade of direct actions and campaign events. Before, during and after the week of action, these leaders would participate in political education, learn about each other's campaign demands and participate in **narrative** work that connected their actions to the larger systems they were working to change.

MFE in Action

The MFE groups started out asking questions like “Where can we all show up and demonstrate the power we have?” and “How can we build more power together?” This is when they undertook a **governing power analysis**. First, MFE worked with each organization, individually and in group settings, to understand the role and power of capital in Minnesota. A mobile team researcher dug in and uncovered the state’s “Dirty Dozen” CEOs. This included folks like Stephen Hemsely, CEO of UnitedHealthcare, who made \$109 million himself in 2009 and who fought the affordable parts of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Or Gregg Steinhafel, CEO of Target, who made \$21 million in 2011 and gave a \$150,000 contribution to an anti-gay marriage campaign. MFE found out that there was significant overlap between the Dirty Dozen’s corporate governance structures; that is, they sat on each other’s boards. They also shared control of business associations and think tanks like the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce, Minnesota Business Partnership and Center for the American Experiment. These groups adopted the neoliberal agenda and made it specific to Minnesota: deregulation of business, tax cuts, and opposition to nearly all forms of public investment. MFE also looked into the political spending of the Dirty Dozen (and the groups they controlled) in order to understand what influence these CEOs had over various elected officials.



↗ The Land Stewardship Project has long fought corporate power

This analysis equipped MFE to do several things. First, it helped them see that the groups were often fighting the same opponents across their various campaigns. Second, it allowed them to make the strategic shift of focusing more of their resources on the Dirty Dozen, and fewer on the elected officials that carried out their bidding. For example, the MFE groups decided to spend less time pressuring the Minnesota congressional representatives who opposed the ACA and instead, conducted civil disobedience at the corporate headquarters of UnitedHealthCare. This shone a light directly on UnitedHealthCare CEO, Stephen Hemsely, and exposed the profit motive behind his opposition to the ACA. Third, the governing power analysis they developed helped the groups tell a common story about what they were up against, why they needed each other, and what they had to do. This was especially important for developing political education spaces that could connect the members of the MFE groups to each other. Fourth, the governing power analysis helped MFE identify new allies who faced the same opponents and were fighting similar fights. For example, MFE started working with the [Land Stewardship Project](#), an organization of predominantly white farmers and rural residents that had a long track record of fighting back against corporate power that was exploiting rural communities and degrading the land.

Targeting Target

One step toward developing a shared **governing agenda** was MFE’s work to take on Target Corporation, a major power-player in the state and a Fortune 50 company. A number of MFE member organizations already had fights that were directed at Target. TakeAction Minnesota had a campaign to pass state legislation to ban the criminal history box from private sector job applications. They decided to focus on getting Target to lead other corporations by example and “ban the box” on their job applications. CTUL had a campaign to win a responsible contractor policy that would ensure subcontracted retail cleaners had the right to choose if they wanted union representation. ISALAH had a campaign to move Target to fulfill its promises of job creation in the African immigrant community where its new corporate campus was located. SEIU Local 26 had already unionized the custodial and security subcontractors that cleaned Target’s headquarters.



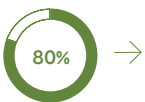
Calling on Target to change its hiring practices at the headquarters [2012]

The MFE groups agreed to sequence the timing and negotiations of their campaigns in a way that could build pressure on Target to negotiate over each organizations’ demands. For example, Local 26 was in tense contract negotiations with the companies that Target subcontracted to clean its downtown offices. It decided to time its impending strike to coincide with the pressure that the other groups were building on Target; this allowed Local 26 to more effectively build pressure on the subcontractor companies it was negotiating with as well. The MFE groups knew that their alliance would be tested when it came time to negotiate with Target. So, well before negotiations took place, they agreed that if one of the groups had the opportunity to settle its demands before the others, it could do so. But no organization could speak for another or ask others to stand down.

MFE unified its demands with a week of action focused on Target. SEIU held a one-day strike. CTUL led walkouts by retail store cleaners. TakeAction Minnesota led a direct action that took over the lobby of Target’s corporate headquarters with 300 MFE activists. Target agreed to a meeting to discuss banning the box on the spot. This was the first step toward successfully pushing Target to ban the box for all of its 350,000 employees nationwide. Meanwhile, Target came to the table with CTUL and began negotiations that would lead to a requirement of “labor peace” for its subcontracted store cleaners. This would open the door for SEIU to organize those janitors into their union, raising standards for wages and benefits. Each group benefited from the strategies and tactics of the others and collectively they achieved much, much more than they could have on their own. They also grew closer with one another and hungrier for the next fight, which they found in the electoral arena with a campaign to defeat a voter ID amendment in 2012.

MFE in the electoral arena

While the fight with Target in Minneapolis was unfolding, Republicans in the state legislature had put an amendment on the ballot that introduced a new voter ID requirement. At the time, the amendment was polling at 80% public support. The MFE groups entered the **electoral arena** to defeat that amendment, after other electoral groups, including the state Democratic party, shied away from this sure-to-be-difficult fight. MFE chose to weigh in on voter rights because it was a clear racial justice issue and because



The Minnesota voter ID amendment started with 80% public support.



the success of the amendment would mean a devastating shift in structural power for the members that their organizations represented. They also saw it as an opportunity to build independent political infrastructure, including a statewide base, to develop stronger communications capacity and to establish more sophisticated shared data systems.

Outside of in-kind donations of staff from the MFE member groups (who made up nearly the entirety of the campaign's staff), and office space from SEIU Healthcare, the campaign had almost no money. But because of the early investment that the MFE groups had made in the initiative, it did have a robust field campaign, rooted in an analysis that connected the dots between voter suppression, corporate power and structural racism. Against long odds, the voter ID amendment was defeated in Minnesota, and the Republican majorities in the legislature were thrown out. The governor and other political power players in the state credited the groups in the MFE alignment as being instrumental in the defeat of the amendment, marking their emergence as more serious players in state politics.

MFE in the legislative arena

The MFE groups saw a big opening to pass progressive legislation with Democrats, who were in control of the state legislature after a wave of voter sentiment in defense of LGBTQ+ and voting rights had swept many of them into office. TakeAction Minnesota's campaign to ban the box from all private sector job applications quickly gained ground. A TakeAction Minnesota member-leader, St. Rep. Ray Dehn, who himself had a criminal record, authored its bill in the State House of Representatives. He was a key strategic ally and successfully navigated the bill to pass that chamber. But in the State Senate, the bill was stopped by the opposition of business groups. TakeAction Minnesota leveraged its newly-established relationship with Target, asking the corporation to sway the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce to drop its opposition to the bill. Target agreed to ask the Chamber to stand down, and the Chamber changed its stance that same day. The bill quickly passed out of committee and was soon signed into law.

MFE groups led or were key players in a number of other legislative advancements in that period, including raising the state minimum wage, closing corporate tax loopholes, establishing collective bargaining rights for 20,000 home care workers, passing a homeowners bill of rights, expanding public health care access and more. Throughout these policy fights, MFE groups continued to organize protests, direct action and earned media events to pressure Democratic legislators to meet their demands.

Learning Lessons: The path to co-governance

As state legislative work was advancing, new opportunities for the MFE formation emerged in Minneapolis. With the help of TakeAction and SEIU, longtime TakeAction Minnesota member, Betsy Hodges, defeated an establishment opponent to become the mayor of Minneapolis. Hodges, a white woman, ran and won on a platform of advancing racial equity. She placed several MFE leaders on her transition committee. But the MFE groups did not have a clear **governing agenda** in place to move with Hodges, and they were slow to approach her with an ask.

After several months, the MFE groups brought the Working Families Agenda to Hodges, which included paid sick days, scheduling reforms, a \$15/hr minimum wage, and a co-enforcement strategy to combat wage theft once the package entered the **administrative arena**. Hodges backed the plan and announced it in her State of the City address in her second year in office.

But MFE allies were not aligned on the strategy to win the package. Some organizations saw Hodges as an ally and co-strategist. Others felt that she should be pushed publicly, and they sided with some of her opponents on the city council. When employee-scheduling reforms were introduced, the organized backlash from restaurant owners was swift and fierce. It caught MFE and the mayor flat-footed. Ultimately, Hodges decided to drop the employee-scheduling reforms from the package without notifying her MFE allies.



Sign remembering Jamar Clark in Minneapolis, MN [2021]

In November 2015, Minneapolis police shot and killed Jamar Clark, an unarmed, Black man, blocks from its 4th precinct. Black Lives Matter protesters, including many members of the MFE groups, occupied the 4th police precinct for nearly three weeks. Some MFE groups participated in an occupation of Mayor Hodges' office, and others publicly called her out for not having done enough to address Minneapolis' corrupt police culture. The occupation of the precinct eventually ended, but tensions between Hodges and racial justice protesters persisted.

By the end of 2017, MFE and Hodges had successfully passed nearly all of their agenda: NOC and CTUL led the fight and won a \$15/hr minimum wage, Minneapolis became the first midwestern city to pass paid sick days, and groundbreaking wage-theft legislation gave CTUL access to city resources to enforce the ordinance and to train workers on their rights.

However, Hodges lost her reelection campaign. She faced opponents to her left, including St. Rep. Ray Dehn, who criticized Hodges for not having done enough to advance her signature issue of racial equity. TakeAction, who had supported Hodges in her first election, did not support her reelection bid, in part because its members were divided between Hodges and Dehn. In the meantime, Jacob Frey, a moderate Democrat aligned with downtown business interests and the police union, criticized Hodges for moving too far and too fast on racial equity, and defeated her. Hodges' loss was a significant lost opportunity for progressives in Minneapolis and for the MFE alignment.

Minnesotans for a Fair Economy Evolves

MFE began to evolve after Hodges' defeat, as new power-building opportunities appeared at the state level. Starting in late 2017, CTUL organized [Tending the Soil](#), an alignment table of working class, power-building organizations of color in Minneapolis. In 2020, in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd and the uprising that followed, Tending the Soil began driving redevelopment efforts that centered working class people of color while building long-term organizing infrastructure. It is currently working to build a shared agenda across its member organizations, which include SEIU Local 26, New Justice Project, Unidos Minnesota and Inquilinx Unidxs Por Justicia.

Around the time that Tending the Soil was being formed, MFE's statewide groups were also evolving into a new, broader formation called Our Minnesota Future (OMF). Under the OMF banner, MFE invited other statewide groups to work together to influence the gubernatorial primary and to advance a co-governance strategy. Member-leaders were enrolled in multiple political education programs and joined mass meetings to understand the structures of governance that they would need to win in order to set the agenda, and to learn more about the strategies they would need to deploy to get there. As part of its co-governance strategy, the OMF groups screened and recommended more than 120 member-leaders and allies to serve in the next governor's administration. Ultimately, the candidate most OMF groups preferred fell short in the gubernatorial primary and their political power with the new administration was initially muted. Nevertheless, two of OMF's key allies were appointed to the new governor's cabinet and others were appointed to key administrative posts.

OMF's (and MFE's) work toward co-governance evolved into a close strategic relationship with Democratic caucus leadership in the State House and Senate through the Minnesota Values Project. Minnesota Values Project was an initiative started by Liz Olson, a former TakeAction board member and staff member who was elected to the State House. Starting in 2019, community groups, labor unions and legislative allies met regularly to strategize around narrative, issue priorities, and advocacy inside and outside the state capitol. Much of what the group was able to accomplish in this time is reflected in the House Democratic Caucus's Top 10 Bills from 2019 to 2022, which includes paid time to care (Paid Family and Medical Leave + Earned Sick & Safe Time), wage-theft prevention and enforcement, rural broadband expansion, and investments in early childhood and education. In 2023, Democrats will have legislative majorities in both the State House and Senate and many of these bills stand a good chance of passing.

MFE evolved in other important ways too. ISALAH/Faith in Minnesota and SEIU anchor We Make Minnesota. This formation is driving an inclusive narrative meant to strengthen bonds across race and geography and is making the case for increased state revenue.



Organizers with Tending the Soil event

MINNESOTA ALIGNMENT TABLES: A CASE STUDY

In Summary:

Minnesotans for a Fair Economy did not start as an alliance to build governing power. It was a new and innovative formation meant to synchronize campaigns across different organizations and to identify common targets. This approach allowed the MFE groups to strategize and plan together in new ways and, in turn, to think bigger about the levers of power they would need to pull to advance their agenda.

The MFE alignment made a significant impact. It won concrete victories for low-wage workers at the local and state level and it changed the policies of a Fortune 50 corporation multiple times. In Minneapolis, MFE built a close relationship with the mayor, which was instrumental in winning an increased minimum wage, wage-theft protections and paid sick days. At the state level, the groups led the defeat of a voter ID amendment and won multiple breakthroughs on progressive taxation, ban the box and more.





The groups' path toward governing power was not linear and had many setbacks. They stumbled when trying to move their agenda in Minneapolis and lost the chance to win employee-scheduling reforms. Their mayoral ally lost her reelection campaign, in part because the alliance could not marshal its resources to back her. Our Minnesota Future did not initially succeed in powerfully positioning the groups with the incoming gubernatorial administration. But they did build a new strategic relationship with state legislators that could deliver significant results in the years to come.



MFE demonstrated that organizing groups can align their strategies in new and powerful ways that achieve impactful victories and build power for the long-haul. While MFE has evolved into several other formations, its founding organizations—and many others—continue to carry forward many of its innovations, analysis and relationships with each other.



THE PEOPLE
WHO BUILD
OUR COMMUNITY
DESERVE BETTER

TOGETHER
WE
STAND

APPENDIX A: ARENA OF GOVERNING POWER CASE STUDIES

I.	Electoral Arena: Million Voters Project (MVP)	[63]
II.	Legislative Arena: The Congressional Progressive Caucus	[65]
III.	Administrative Arena: Our Minnesota Future	[67]
IV.	Judicial and Constitutional Arena: The American Constitution Society (ACS) and the Florida Voting Rights Restoration for Felons Initiative	[69]
V.	Worldview Arena: The Sunrise Movement	[71]
VI.	Economic Arena: California Fast Food Council	[73]

I. ELECTORAL ARENA:

Million Voters Project (MVP)

In 2019, the [Million Voters Project](#) (MVP) was gearing up for a fight that would represent the culmination of two decades of work: the fight to reform California’s inequitable system of property taxation by winning Prop 15, the Schools and Communities First ballot measure. Prop 13 was passed in 1978 and rolled back most local real estate assessments to 1975 market value levels. It also limited the property tax rate increases on both commercial and residential real estate. This had the net impact of severely reducing how much revenue local governments had to cover basic services for residents, such as schools, hospitals, parks and other amenities.

Community groups recognized that for long-term, progressive change, Prop 13 needed to be reformed. Not only so the state could have more revenue to expand social safety net services, but to demonstrate that the groups could win a decisive community-led victory that would shift the balance of power in the state. After careful analysis, they narrowed in on the structural reform that would have the most political potential and impact: reforming the commercial property tax freeze and in turn, generating billions in revenue for public services.

The groups determined that to win this electoral fight, they would need to mobilize one million new and infrequent voters to “fill the gap” between likely voters, who were tilted against Prop 13 reform (homeowners, older, whiter), and infrequent voters, who were disproportionately impacted by the 40 years of disinvestment due to Prop 13. They came together under the banner of “Million Voters Project,” and over the course of a decade, started building their electoral muscles and deepening alignment across their respective networks. They also ran various policy initiatives and programs to test whether the conditions were right to reform Prop 13. For example, organizations from MVP worked with allies to pass a statewide Millionaire’s Tax, and anchored a field campaign to pass Proposition 47, which reformed California’s sentencing laws.

MVP partners and coalition members built deep buy-in from key partners (particularly from labor unions), and developed a cross-sectoral campaign structure to hold the united front needed to pass the initiative. In 2020, the coalition ran Proposition 15, the Schools and Communities First Initiative. Due to



the pandemic, the campaign was only able to run a digital and phone field program, but it had record voter registration and turnout, contacting 760,000 voters and identifying 592,000 Prop 15 supporters. Unfortunately, the opposition poured over \$78 million into the campaign to defeat the measure, and Schools and Communities First ultimately lost at the ballot, with a slim margin of 48% to 52%.

The MVP effort went well beyond the scale of work that many progressive base building organizations typically put into building power in the electoral arena. First, their goal was to build a decisive voting bloc over the course of years, to achieve a significant structural reform. This is different from the approach of many progressive organizations, who tend to focus on building an army of volunteers or paid staff to back a candidate. Second, their electoral strategy took two decades to develop and implement and involved rigorous research and analysis. This is different from electoral work that only happens in major election years and which often treats one election as disconnected from the last. Third, MVP built a significant infrastructure that it controls, including data analysis, direct voter contact methods, research and fundraising. This is different from the tendency of many progressive organizations to rely solely on the Democratic Party or its independent affiliates for their electoral strategy and infrastructure. Finally, MVP's electoral strategy shaped the [Long-Term Agenda](#) (Hinson 2019) that its groups subsequently developed, which maps out MVP's intended stepping stone and milestone fights for years to come.

This has set MVP up to not only win larger electoral fights down the line, but to reshape the terrain on which those fights are waged.



II. LEGISLATIVE ARENA:

The Congressional Progressive Caucus

In the 2021-22 legislative period, the [Congressional Progressive Caucus](#) (CPC) was the second largest caucus amongst Congressional Democrats. The CPC had 96 members—95 of the 221 House Democrats and just one of the 50 Democrats in the Senate (Bernie Sanders). The New Democrats, a pro-business caucus, had 97 members. One of the critical factors that played a role in the CPC’s ability to **grow its power in the legislative arena** was the electoral success of progressives that, in turn, grew its ranks. A second critical factor was the leadership of organizer-turned-Congresswoman, **Rep. Pramila Jayapal**, the chair of the CPC. Jayapal became a political force for a progressive agenda in Congress by ensuring that CPC members would be required to vote as a bloc on a regular basis. This power was tested in the legislative battle between Congressional Democrats over the Build Back Better bill.

In its first year, the Biden Administration put forward two related bills:



Representative Pramila Jayapal
of Washington state



[1] The “infrastructure bill,” which was designed to invest \$1.2 trillion dollars in rebuilding roads, bridges and railways and which had bipartisan support.

[2] The Build Back Better bill, which was originally proposed to provide \$3.5 trillion dollars to launch an expanded safety net in this country, including new programs like universal Pre-K, paid family leave and provisions that would allow Medicare to directly negotiate prescription drug prices.

Corporate Democrats immediately moved to shoot down the Build Back Better bill while moving the bipartisan infrastructure bill forward, leveraging their power over the slim Democratic majority in the Senate. In the past, they would have been able to do this with little to no resistance from their colleagues because there was no real organized progressive power in Congress. But the CPC fought back for the first time by withholding their votes on the infrastructure bill, which had bi-partisan support but not enough votes to pass without CPC votes in the House. This meant that passing the infrastructure

bill would require a simultaneous vote in the Senate on the Build Back Better act, forcing corporate Democrats to come to the negotiating table to determine what pieces of the Build Back Better bill would make it into law.

In addition to voting as a bloc, the CPC employed three other strategies to use its power in this legislative fight. First, because the CPC knew it couldn't win everything it wanted to include in the Build Back Better bill, it **set shared priorities that it would fight for**, including increasing the number home health care workers available to the public through Medicare, making investments in affordable housing and tackling climate change with a combination of mandates and strategic investments. Second, the CPC **coordinated lobbying and grassroots advocacy directly with progressive organizations** through the Progressive Caucus Center, an organization that linked outside groups and CPC members. Third, the CPC **built an alliance with the leadership** of the Democratic Party to check the power of corporate Democrats in the Senate.

There were real limits to what progressives could accomplish in that moment, given the Democratic Party's narrow majorities. The Build Back Better bill was narrowed down from \$3.5 trillion to about \$2 trillion in spending and many programs were cut or narrowed along the way. Then, after a disastrous off-year election, both centrists and progressive Democrats were swayed to pass the infrastructure bill without passing Build Back Better.

Still, the CPC was able to mark itself as a real power player in an arena over which the corporate Democrats had previously held near-exclusive control. Because the CPC was able to approach its strategy in a way that reshaped the terrain of the legislative fight it was waging, many of the policy priorities that were not passed in the Build Back Better bill remained on the table and were passed in the following year. Notably, the Inflation Reduction Act, which has been billed as the largest climate legislation in US history, was passed by Congress and signed into law in August 2022.



↑ Comprised of more than
100 members of Congress

III. ADMINISTRATIVE ARENA:

Our Minnesota Future

One example of what it looks like for grassroots groups to influence the makeup of the administrative arena comes from Our Minnesota Future (OMF). OMF was a 17-member political alliance that was created in 2016 to develop a co-governing relationship between grassroots groups and the state's next governor. To accomplish that goal, the OMF groups decided to develop a common narrative frame and set of values that they each repeated in the lead up to the 2018 gubernatorial election. They also organized forums where their members met in large groups with the candidates and backed up each other's priorities. Importantly, the groups organized and turned out large numbers of people from all across the state to attend the Democratic Party caucuses and to elect delegates to represent them at the party's state convention.

This is typical of the approach progressive organizations take when shaping state policy: they focus on engaging candidates on their priorities and then on ensuring that the candidate who shares the most important elements of their agenda is elected. Once the election is won, they tend to shift their efforts toward lobbying their elected champion to implement and support those policies. But the OMF groups knew that the way their legislative agenda would be enacted after the election could look radically different depending on what forces were at play in the administrative arena. So they decided to shape the context in which the next governor would be implementing the policies that they had demanded he commit to during his candidacy. This meant that well before the election, OMF searched their own membership rolls for leaders who could be appointed to the hundreds of administrative positions in state government. It also meant that member-leaders were enrolled in multiple political education programs to understand the structures of governance that they would need to win in order to set the agenda, and to learn more about the strategies they would need to deploy to get there.

Each of the leaders who was identified as a potential appointee was vetted by OMF groups for areas of expertise, skills and ideological alignment with the groups' issue priorities. They developed dossiers on more than 120 leaders, shared it with the new governor's transition team before the election and followed up to ensure their appointees were considered after the election was won. Because many of the OMF groups supported a candidate in the primary election that lost to the eventual governor, OMF's influence with the incoming governor was diminished. Still, some of their work paid off. The governor appointed two of OMF's recommended leaders as state commissioners of Minnesota's largest agencies—Education and Human Services. The assistant commissioner of Human Services was an OMF appointee as well.

Instead of waiting to see if the officials appointed to the next governor's administration could be pushed into an alignment that fit their values and priorities, OMF decided to ensure that people who already shared their agenda were appointed to enact those policies. In doing so, they made use of a power that many progressive groups tend to forfeit—the power not just to influence policy, but to make it all but certain that the intention behind a policy's development is reflected in its implementation and enforcement.



Faith in Minnesota FiMN
Propels Murphy Victory
↑

IV. JUDICIAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL ARENA:

The American Constitution Society (ACS) and the Florida Voting Rights Restoration for Felons Initiative

Progressive movements have a lot of room to grow in our approach to building governing power in the judicial and constitutional arena, but organizations like the [American Constitution Society](#) (ACS) and recent constitutional amendments won at the state-level point to new paths forward.

The ACS provides resources to progressives to shape key legal and public policy issues and fosters a network of law students and lawyers across 48 states and in almost every law school. In 2020, its work to “nurture the next generation” of progressive lawyers, judges, policy experts and legislators supported the White House and Senate in identifying hundreds of candidates from its network for judicial offices and the federal bench. These are **key placements for movement allies who can help shape and interpret laws that align with our values and support our agendas.**



↑ Organizers supporting Florida's Amendment 4 [2018]



At the state level, constitutional amendments like Florida’s 2018 Amendment 4, the **Voting Rights Restoration for Felons Initiative**, demonstrate a different yet powerful way to make laws work in our favor. Run and won as a ballot initiative that required a 60 percent supermajority to pass, Amendment 4 passed with 64 percent of the vote and **re-enfranchised over 1 million Floridians** who had served their sentences. Running ballot measures to influence state law is not an uncommon tactic for progressive organizations, particularly for those operating in states like California. But by running a ballot measure that could change the state’s fundamental law, the organizers **who won Amendment 4 created the opportunity to win a larger-scale**, more permanent shift in power than most ballot measures tend to achieve.

This was a **victory that had the potential to affect all elections to follow in this critical swing state**, particularly given that more than 20 percent of otherwise eligible, Black adults were unable to vote in the system as it existed before. But it was a win that also demonstrated the need to build governing power across multiple arenas. Shortly after Amendment 4 was won, Republican lawmakers in the state legislature successfully passed a statute that prevents the people who have been re-enfranchised by the amendment from voting until all fines associated with the conviction have been paid. The statute was challenged as unconstitutional, but upheld by the US Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

Building governing power in the judicial and constitutional arenas means thinking big about our potential wins—particularly because this arena can often feel distant and almost untouchable. But it’s not. These rules have all been made by human hands to serve particular interests, and they can change all the same—to serve our people’s interests.



V. WORLDVIEW ARENA:

The Sunrise Movement

In January 2019, youth climate activists at the [Sunrise Movement](#) led a sit-in at House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s offices. Their demand? A “**Green New Deal,**” to **stop climate change, invest in good, green jobs and advance racial justice.** The event, which received broad coverage after newly-elected Congressmember Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez decided to join the activists, marked the eruption of the “Green New Deal” frame into mainstream media and policy debates. Often, when groups engage in direct action to shape the narrative around their issue, staying in the news cycle for a few hours or days is understood as the ultimate victory. In this case, climate activists took a different approach. The sit-in was followed by intensive organizing and media campaigns, including a major push in the 2020 primaries to make climate a top issue for Democratic candidates. The power that the Sunrise Movement and groups like them **were able to win in the worldview arena around climate justice** had more than one result that year: Bernie Sanders adopted much of the Green New Deal agenda and Biden released a final climate platform that was significantly more progressive than it would have been otherwise.



↑ Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez with supporters of the “Green New Deal” [2022]

The Green New Deal frame is not without contradictions. It has become the Right-wing media’s favorite punching bag, as Conservative forces continue to promote climate denialism as a narrative tool to advance their agenda. And while some Democratic politicians have taken up “climate,” as a priority, it still exists in the public mind, for the most part, within the existing neoliberal narrative framework. This means that politicians on both sides of the aisle continue to work with Big Oil and Gas to popularize policy solutions that bypass the significant government regulation that a comprehensive climate response will require. Even now, the Green New Deal frame is contested amongst progressive forces and a wide range of constituencies struggle to align around it.

Still, the fact that over four years, social movements were able to **make “action on climate change” a central component of the national, Democratic agenda**, is a significant victory. Their efforts have been advanced by the ongoing impacts of climate-related, extreme weather events and decades of on-the-ground organizing in frontline communities and in the broader climate movement. But the fights that climate groups have waged more recently in the realm of worldview have also been key.



Organizers with The Sunrise Movement



That work has had a clear impact—in August 2022, Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act, which has been billed as the largest climate legislation in US history. Action to stop climate change has become **part of the “common sense” of what is expected from governing powers**, which has created new opportunities for policy and programmatic wins.

VI. ECONOMIC ARENA:

California Fast Food Council

In 2022, fast food workers in California organized and won AB 257, the **Fast Food Accountability and Standards Recovery Act**. The first law of its kind in the US, this legislation established a 10-person statewide council made up of workers, business representatives and government officials who would set higher standards for the people working for the industry's largest chains.

The workers and elected officials who made the fast food council possible could have focused their efforts exclusively on a smaller segment of the industry or on a **shorter-term win**. Instead, over the course of years, fast food workers across California held over 300 strikes in support of legislation that would give them the power to regulate an industry that employs over 500,000 workers, around stronger standards for wages, worker health and safety, sexual harassment, wage theft, employer retaliation and more.

This win was unique in a few ways. First, progressive organizations often ask government to investigate bad behavior and impose penalties on bad employers on their behalf. In this case, workers have a **direct say in setting higher standards themselves**. Second, the policy campaigns that progressive organizations and unions often wage in this arena tend to focus on one or a few issues at a time. The Fast Food Accountability and Standards Recovery Act, on the other hand, **establishes more democratic control** for workers over their workplace over a broad range of issues common to the industry.

Winning this historic advance also required compromise. As workers negotiated with legislators, joint liability was pulled from the bill. **This provision would have made both fast food corporations and their franchises responsible for penalties**. Now, only the franchiser is responsible for any penalties imposed. Workers also agreed to narrow the scope of the wage board to companies with 100 or more franchise locations instead of companies with 30 or more locations, which is what workers originally wanted.

Still, this legislation has given fast food workers access to an important tool to combat low-road business practices, while setting a more equitable and dignified floor for workers and



businesses in the industry. It has also positioned other municipal bodies to **replicate the model and to fight for their own versions** of a statewide council across a range of industries and geographic locations.

Corporate forces are well aware of the risk this structure poses to their agenda. In September 2022, the National Restaurant Association and International Franchise Association introduced a referendum that, if won, would overturn the fast food council and roll back its power. Their efforts remind us that **it is not enough to win big in one arena of power**—we must be prepared to sustain that power with the expectation that when we win, corporate forces will put the full weight of their influence behind undoing our gains.

APPENDIX B: GOVERNING POWER STRATEGY CASE STUDIES

I.	Rise Up Colorado: From a Target-Focused Analysis to a Governing Power Analysis	[76]
II.	Million Voters Project (MVP): Extending the Strategic Time Horizon and Making Power Building as Important as the Win	[80]
III.	Invest in Our New York (IONY) Campaign: From Tactical Messaging to Leveraging Narrative to Govern	[84]
IV.	Working Families Party (WFP): Developing Independent Political Infrastructure	[86]
V.	Harold Washington for Mayor: Building Base to Lead a Constituency and Building Multi-racial Working Class Majority	[88]

I. RISE UP COLORADO



↑ Together Colorado leaders
at weekend trainings [2022]

From a Target-Focused Analysis to a Governing Power Analysis

Colorado’s political landscape has shifted significantly in the last 20 years. In the early 2000s, Colorado was dependably red. By 2008, Barack Obama had won the state and Democrats had won control of the state general assembly and the governorship. Although Democrats have strengthened their control of Colorado’s state government in the years since, the power of corporations and the super-wealthy has remained the driving force of state politics. The work that Rise Up Colorado has done in response, to identify the social forces that truly govern the state, points to a new way to approach research and analysis in our fights.

Rise Up Colorado is an alignment table that has been steadily building relationships among some of Colorado’s strongest power-building organizations since its formation in 2016. It’s current membership includes several community organizations and their associated c4 organizations: [Together Colorado](#) (an affiliate of Faith in Action), [Movimiento Poder](#) (a community organization rooted in Denver’s working class Latinx communities), [United for a New Economy](#) (an affiliate of PowerSwitch and Center for Popular Democracy), [Colorado People’s Action](#) (an affiliate of People’s Action), and [9to5 Colorado](#). The alignment also includes [SEIU Local 105](#), [Colorado WINS](#), [Colorado Education Association](#), [Colorado AFL-CIO](#), and the [Colorado Working Families Party](#).

In 2021, Grassroots Power Project launched a Long Term Agenda process with Rise Up to help its member groups develop shared strategy more effectively. This meant the Rise Up groups first had to undertake a governing power analysis that could help them better understand the forces they were up against and what they would need to do to defeat them.

The governing power analysis that Rise Up conducted was different from a typical target-focused analysis in that it went beyond the question of “which party is in control?” or “which target has the power to give us what we want?” To build a strategy that could effectively weaken and divide their opposition, the Rise Up groups knew they would need to learn much more about the agendas of the people and institutions who surrounded, influenced and funded their targets.

In collaboration with Jim Freeman of the [Social Movement Support Lab](#) at the University of Denver, the groups devised these research questions:

- **Who holds extreme wealth in Colorado, including individuals, corporations and large employers?**
- **How are the extremely wealthy connected to each other? What business, political and cultural institutions do they influence or control?**
- **What are the dominant sectors of Colorado's economy? What constituencies are impacted by these sectors as workers or consumers, and what are their geographic concentrations?**
- **What is the overall composition of the Colorado General Assembly (House, Senate and Leadership) both along partisan lines as well as intra-party factions within each major party? What are the forces and major interests that shape the makeup of state government?**
- **Who are major political donors, and which parties and candidates are those donors affiliated with?**
- **How do demographics and political interests intersect with state geography/legislative districts in ways that can chart a path toward shifting governing power?**
- **What are the key elements of the overall political and ideological agenda of Colorado's ultra-wealthy forces, and what are their policy priorities in the current period?**



Researchers used these questions to identify the wealthiest donors and corporations in the state and to examine how they moved their money through various philanthropic foundations and political entities. They found that the super-wealthy had invested in six key corporate, conservative organizations—Colorado Chamber of Commerce, the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce, Colorado Concern, Colorado Business Roundtable, Colorado Succeeds and the Common Sense Institute. Rise Up decided to focus its research on these organizations and on the key fights in which these organizations were engaged. They found that the organizations were working to shape policy around a wide range of issues that included labor, education, criminal justice, environment and economic justice.

Researchers also analyzed the Colorado general assembly, including the demographics and voting trends of each member district. They highlighted districts that were poised to shift from either “toss up” to “light blue” or from “light blue” to “dark blue” in upcoming elections. This helped them to identify the districts that might be prime places for Rise Up to consolidate working class, multi-racial voting blocs, and to launch primary election battles against corporate-aligned Democrats.

One piece of the research that is not yet complete is a more nuanced analysis of state legislators that can help Rise Up differentiate between progressive Democrats, corporate Democrats, corporate Republicans, and MAGA Republicans. This research will require both an examination of legislative votes and a subjective assessment of legislators by groups on the ground.

Crucially, Rise Up has not simply gathered information about how power in the state is organized; it is making a concrete plan to apply it. As a next step, Rise Up is mapping out stepping stone campaigns that can create the conditions for a more favorable political landscape that pushes back on corporate power. This includes a possible state revenue ballot question in 2024.

The governing power analysis that the Rise Up groups conducted clarified that the corporate elite is the primary opposition that **Rise Up must work together to combat if they are going to advance their agenda in Colorado**. The analysis also provided greater insight into what working people’s organizations must do if they are going to win the power they need to set the agenda.

II. MILLION VOTERS PROJECT [MVP]

Extending the Strategic Time Horizon and Making Power Building as Important as the Win

In 2019, Million Voters Project (MVP) launched a process to develop a [Long Term Agenda](#) (LTA) (Hinson 2019), just as they were gearing up for the fight to win Prop 15, the Schools and Communities First (SCF) ballot measure, a historic effort to reform California’s inequitable system of property taxation. MVP is a statewide alliance of seven community-driven state and regional networks, representing California’s geographic, ethnic and racial diversity. MVP recognized that in order to maximize all the power and momentum that they would build through the SCF campaign (regardless of the outcome of the election), they would need to be able to quickly pivot to the “next big fight.” They also recognized they could not fight on all fronts, and had to prioritize issues if they were going to advance transformative structural reforms.

In partnership with the Grassroots Power Project (GPP), MVP began a multi-phase process to identify its Long Term Agenda: prioritizing a set of structural reforms they would advance for the next 3-10 years. MVP and GPP started by deepening ideological and strategic alignment within the networks, conducting strategic political education on key concepts, such as the multidimensional view of power and the Long Term Agenda. MVP and GPP worked together to articulate four “strategic pathways” for change, or fronts on which power can be shifted over time, that cut across issue areas and overlap.

The strategic pathways identified by the alliance were:

Building Economic Power: redistribution of wealth, clearing the economic barriers to pursuing popular economic reforms like fair taxation.

Expanding Democracy: efforts to reduce the role of money in politics, to expand voting rights and to create more experiences with direct, democratic decision-making.

Building a government based on care and inclusion: to provide the basis of good quality of life for all communities, including education, healthcare, transportation.

Reparations and Restoration: addressing the effects of systemic inequalities, discrimination, racism, exclusion, disinvestment, environmental racism and criminalization.

Developing coalition power

MVP recognized that they needed to be in coordination and alignment with a broader set of allies, because no one organization or alliance can make the big wins that communities need alone. MVP convened grassroots power-building organizations and networks, policy intermediaries and aligned funders to grow the coalition power necessary to develop a multi-year, multi-issue and multi-sector agenda. This became the “North Star Committee” (NSC), a group created to help align the movement ecosystem, build greater constellations of power and collectively develop the Long Term Agenda.

Utilizing multiple strategies to develop a Long Term Agenda

MVP and GPP's first step was a strategic research project. The organizations started with a scan of structural reforms across seven key issues: progressive revenue, immigration, housing, gender justice, criminal justice, climate and democracy. MVP and GPP interviewed over 60 organizers, advocates and academics, reviewed research with NSC members in the field, and brought forward 7 structural reforms, with a power and landscape analysis, for the NSC's consideration.

The North Star Committee then discussed and debated all 7 reforms, and brought them back to their core leadership to narrow the 7 down to 3 reforms. Over the course of six weeks, 16 state networks and their affiliates and over 250 people discussed and debated the 7 potential structural reforms with the goal of narrowing down a prioritized set of 3 reforms for the NSC to take on as part of its Long Term Agenda. After all organizations voted, the NSC selected universal family care, progressive revenue and social housing for deeper research and consideration.

Groups within MVP and the NSC all represented a wide range of constituencies and issues, so narrowing the reforms down was challenging. All of the issues the potential structural reforms represented are deeply felt by communities across California, and the groups had an impressive track record of work on many of them. However, all participants recognized that the social movement was split across too many fronts and was up against powerful opposition. If MVP and the NSC were going to win big, they would need to focus. To help move the process forward, the NSC created a set of "strategic criteria" (included below) that provided a shared framework to assess each structural reform, and which looked at a range of factors such as resonance with the base, political positioning and movement infrastructure.



The next phase included deeper research, power-mapping and grassroots engagement to further narrow the 3 top issues down to 2. GPP and MVP brought together 28 different organizations and 3 different research consultants in research work groups to further explore the policy mechanics of each, the balance of power, the movement landscape, and the potential path to winning. 50 organizers and leaders from across the state then participated in another six-week long process to discuss the research findings and evaluate all the recommendations against the strategic criteria that had been developed.

MVP also deployed additional strategies to develop the LTA; to ensure breadth of engagement from the base of all affiliates, MVP surveyed 20,000 voters to test the resonance of the reforms. MVP also conducted research to help inform narrative strategy and issue terrain.

Grassroots engagement and finalizing a Long Term Agenda

MVP also worked to authentically engage grassroots members in the process of finalizing the LTA. Over the course of many community and organizational meetings, a statewide conference, and one-on-one's, 750 organizational and grassroots leaders used bilingual, popular education materials to discuss the top 3 reforms. Each NSC member then voted again, and landed with strong alignment on the top two issues to focus on for the next 3-10 years: social housing and building progressive fiscal infrastructure.

The selection of these two issues reflects both the material conditions in communities, and the body of shared work together within the NSC. Housing costs impact almost all Californians in some way, particularly low-income communities of color, and MVP aligned around the visionary goal of winning housing that is not on the private market. Winning progressive fiscal infrastructure means generating new progressive revenue, like the Schools and Communities First property tax, but it also means changing the rigged finance and budgeting laws that favor corporations and the elite. MVP recognized this would also mean building the local infrastructure and capacity for organizations to engage in budget fights to directly control where resources are spent in their communities. By including this in the LTA, it builds on MVP's leadership and the many lessons learned over the course of moving progressive revenue measures, and reflects the shared assessment, reaffirmed over the course of the LTA process, that revenue is needed across issue areas, and thus a critical terrain to fight on.

At a broader level, the LTA process:

Consolidated MVP and key partner organizations' shared commitment to a Long Term Agenda that is deeply grounded in power-building;

Built strategy muscle, by engaging participants in rigorous issue analysis, power assessment, prioritization, discussion and debate on a wide range of issues across a diverse set of organizations;

Fostered deep, democratic process and debate by authentically engaging hundreds of organizational leaders and grassroots members in a deliberate process;

Strengthened the social movement ecosystem by creating new conditions and relationships for better coordination, shared strategy and stronger community leadership in future fights.

MVP is now focused on bringing the LTA to life with shared campaigning, strategy development, continued issue analysis, and deeper engagement in the related social movement sectors. Having an LTA now informs how MVP takes on any of its immediate term work, be it policy, electoral, or organizing, helping the alliance think strategically about how any fight it wages will help it to move towards its Long Term Agenda.

CRITERIA FOR NARROWING STRUCTURAL REFORMS

Does this reform meet the criteria? 10=All the Way, 5=Somewhat, 0=No

STRUCTURAL CHANGE: Shifts Wealth, Power and/or Ideology		0-10
Addresses root causes of structural racism		
Scale of Impact: shifts wealth or power from the few to the many		
The impact is concrete, measurable, and enforceable		
Builds momentum & opens political space for future structural reform		
Cuts across multiple pathways: [1] solidarity economics [2] authentic democracy [3] Government based on care and inclusion [4] reparations and restoration		
MOVEMENT BUILDING: Increases Alignment Among Power Building Formations		
Deepens Base Engagement: To what degree does this fight excite and motivate the networks' affiliates?		
Expands the Base: Opportunities to Organize New Unorganized Constituencies (regional/fishhook, impacted communities)		
Deepens Organizational Alignment and Broadens the United Front: Unites and motivates core partners / organizations, brings in broader forces like labor, philanthropy, etc.		
Builds a bigger bloc: Can expand our alliances with new/ non-traditional Allies/ Sectors/ Formations		
NARRATIVE POWER: Build a Base of Support for Interdependence, Government that Cares for Us / Government that We Need, Corporate Accountability & Racial Solidarity		
Fuels a narrative that government cares for us, is based on care and inclusion		
Disrupts dominant narrative (i.e. cynicism, individualism, anti-government, anti-tax)		
Builds ideological unity across organizations and constituencies		
INFRASTRUCTURE POWER: Grows Movement Infrastructure to Set the Agenda		
MVP can have a unique impact & contribution (e.g. leverage our expertise, capacity, relationships) - leadership role and need in the movement ecosystem that MVP is positioned to play		
Networks are already involved and positioned to play a leadership role		
Intersection with local battles that affiliates are leading		
Positions communities of color as powerful players, not just foot soldiers		
POSITIONS US STRATEGICALLY		
Creates wedges and splits in the opposition(s)		
Advances the conditions for Schools and Communities First (SCF) 3.0 - to win the ballot and to enable implementation		
Breakthrough Stepping Stone fights that are winnable in the next two years & advance us towards the longer term structural reform: builds our power, shifts the terrain, leverages openings and improves conditions for our communities		

III. INVEST IN OUR NEW YORK

[IONY]



↑ Organizers from IONY

From Tactical Messaging to Leveraging Narrative to Govern

The 2020-21 ‘[Invest in Our New York](#)’ (IONY) campaign is an example of a successful, concerted effort to shift narrative. The campaign was the culmination of many years of collaborative work on developing and promoting a shared narrative around budget justice, inequality and government spending. The campaign’s core groups developed a joint narrative that could counter the dominant austerity narrative while centering racial justice, and then did joint political education over several years, engaging multiple broader issue coalitions in the work of connecting their issues with the narrative. That work has had impactful results. In 2021, in the wake of the COVID pandemic, the IONY campaign won over \$4 billion in new revenue from taxes on the rich and corporations, which in turn, allowed them to win transformational spending victories including:

- A \$2.1 billion fund for excluded workers, the first fund of its kind in the United States. With this fund, New York provided between \$3,000-\$15,000 survival checks to 200,000 excluded workers.
- A \$2.4 billion emergency rental assistance program that would help tenants across the state, including undocumented people, pay rent debt accrued during the COVID crises.
- A three-year full phase-in of the \$4.2 billion owed annually to New York’s high-needs public schools. This victory came after decades of organizing and legal action for equity in school funding.
- Restoration of over \$400 million in Medicaid cuts to healthcare services.
- More than \$300 million for repairs and renovation of public housing.

In 2020, IONY was formed to coordinate an intensive push to tax the rich and to use that revenue to both close the budget gap opened up by the COVID-19 economic crisis and to fund large new spending initiatives in the 2021 state budget. The narrative strategy built on the years of previous work and focused on four key points: [1] COVID-19 revealed but did not create profound inequalities in our state, [2] the cause of those underlying conditions was decades of disinvestment, especially from Black, Brown, immigrant and working class communities and [3] the way to recover was to tax the wealthy and big corporations in order to [4] Invest in Our NY: our schools, health care, housing; our Black, brown and immigrant communities and our needs.

The groups chose a name for the campaign and the policy program that directly shaped their narrative. After debate over names like “Save our

State” and “Fund our Future,” the steering committee chose “Invest In Our New York (IONY)” to frame the fight. Naming the campaign “Invest In Our New York” allowed the coalition to describe what they wanted to do with funds from the outset of the campaign (“invest in schools”; “invest in tenants”; “invest in nurses”, etc). The campaign’s tagline, “pass six bills to end tax breaks for the rich and invest and rebuild our economy,” allowed IONY to not only highlight that its efforts were not punitive but pointed to the fundamental inequity of our tax system. This consistent, shared narrative also achieved other critical goals:

- It **resonated** with the public and policymakers, creating the terrain for bolder policy.
- It **established** that the long standing decades of disinvestment went deeper and longer than the crisis of the pandemic. It was particularly important to highlight this fact to make it clear that federal money alone couldn’t solve the problems facing the state.
 - It **anticipated** counter attacks and unfavorable external conditions, so that IONY was able to push its targets to take action on its funding demands, even after NY received a huge infusion of federal money.

Aggressive communications work drove the narrative, built support for the revenue policy proposals and spending demands, demonstrated public support, and countered myths about taxing the rich. The communications team used the campaign’s activities, reports and spokespeople to generate constant press. IONY worked with [Data for Progress](#) to conduct several polls that showed that the public support for taxing the rich was incredibly high. They also educated reporters about the fallacies in the dominant narrative (especially the argument that raising taxes would lead to “millionaire tax flight”), and coordinated effective rapid response against the opposition. That coverage helped set the stage for the campaign’s 2021 victory and for future fights.

Although the IONY’s communications work was very effective, narrative shift requires much more than a good communications program. Organizing, actions and elections over multiple cycles were critical to the campaign’s success. Campaign actions and events were designed to drive IONY’s narrative forward (in its choice of targets, its decisions about who spoke, its choices about what the research highlighted, etc). Successful primary campaigns against Democratic incumbents led by the [NY Working Families Party](#) in 2018 and 2020, as well as additional primaries won by [DSA](#) in 2020, elected a core group of progressive champions who ran on the IONY narrative and then validated the campaign in the media and with their legislative colleagues.

Throughout all this work, the IONY coalition’s consistent effort to build narrative and to build and maintain spaces for its membership’s political education meant that the campaign was able to change what was politically possible, and to make it more difficult for its opposition to roll back its gains once the victory was won.

IV. WORKING FAMILIES PARTY [WFP]



↑ Organizers from Working Families Party (WFP)

Developing Independent Political Infrastructure

In the 1990s, New York Democrats started following the national trend towards neoliberalism. Frustrated by both the Democrats' refusal to pursue a progressive agenda and the role of labor in state politics, the [Communications Workers of America](#), the [United Auto Workers](#), ACORN and [Citizen Action of NY](#) formed the Working Families Party (WFP) in 1998. **WFP's goal was to pursue an inside-outside strategy for advancing an economic and racial justice agenda at the state level.** Other unions and groups joined soon after the party's ballot line was secured. Thanks to New York's unusual voting laws, the WFP could cross-endorse candidates from other parties.

In 2012, after years of building political power through electoral and minimum wage campaigns, WFP and its allies and affiliates helped elect enough Democrats in the State Senate to give them a numerical majority. In response, powerful interests, especially in the real estate industry, took advantage of both the cynicism of some Democratic elected officials and the limited attention that most voters pay to Albany politics, to reverse the will of the voters. Their lobbying meant that five Democratic senators (and eventually, a total of eight Democratic Senators) formed the Independent Democratic Conference (IDC) and started voting with Republicans, instead of with their party, in order to give Republicans control of the Senate. This arrangement was tacitly supported (and likely engineered) by the state's powerful, centrist Democratic governor, Andrew Cuomo, who could have used the power of the Executive Branch to break up the IDC. Instead, he used the bottleneck that the IDC's refusal to vote with the Democratic majority created to advance his political agenda. For six years, this dynamic prevented most progressive legislation from moving forward, with the exception of those bills that the governor wanted to sign, when he wanted to sign them.

In our movements, progressive organizations tend to rely on the Democratic party and its independent affiliates, like America Votes, for their electoral strategy and infrastructure—from developing candidates to managing voter data. But in this case, it was clear that key members of the Democratic party had been swayed by corporate forces to abdicate their responsibilities to their constituents. This is what made the work WFP did to build independent political infrastructure that was accountable to its membership so crucial. **Because WFP had built infrastructure that was not controlled by the Democratic Party, it was able to mount a challenge to the IDC that the members of the Democratic party had neither the willingness nor the power to mount themselves.**

In 2014 and 2016, WFP worked to end the IDC through a variety of means, including recruiting primary candidates who could challenge members of the IDC for their seats. They also used the threat of a primary challenge against the Governor himself

to press the Governor and labor, to end their support of the IDC. While WFP's efforts to kill the IDC during this time ended in failure, their strategy did help shift major parts of the labor movement away from the Senate Republicans by convincing them to support the Senate Democrats' effort to win back a solid majority. **The work WFP did in those two cycles helped lay the groundwork for the wins they were able to secure in 2018**, when the IDC was successfully dissolved. However, it also eventually led to the fracturing of the WFP coalition. WFP endorsed Cuomo in the lead up to the 2014 election, but because the coalition had dared to challenge him, Cuomo pulled funding from community organizations that were part of WFP and pressured unions to pull out of the formation.

In 2018, WFP organized powerfully to end the IDC, and worked with other community organizations to recruit challengers for all 8 seats. They also recruited actress, Cynthia Nixon, to challenge Cuomo in the primary, and she was able to use her celebrity status to highlight the barrier to progress that Cuomo and the IDC "Trump Democrats" had represented for years. Though Cuomo would go on to win the governorship once more, he was forced to move to the left on several issues that WFP had worked to elevate in the media and with voters. Importantly, 6 of the 8 WFP-endorsed candidates won their primaries and unseated IDC members, and that, along with the work WFP did to successfully defeat Republicans that election cycle, meant that they were able to win both a Democratic Senate Majority and a new bloc of progressive champions within that majority.

By this time, WFP had worked to win a Democratic Senate Majority for 2 decades and had worked to defeat the IDC for 3 election cycles (6 years). If they had achieved the former without the latter, the Democratic Senate Majority could have easily remained under the control of corporate Democrats beholden to real estate interests. Instead, 2019, 2020, and 2021 brought transformational legislative victories on issues that included rent control, criminal justice reform, public funding of elections and tax reforms. Achieving both goals was due to numerous factors. The four most important were: the opening created by the political moment; WFP's success in shifting the narrative about the Senate and the IDC; WFP's ability to set the stage for the races long before 2018; and the strength of WFP's independent electoral infrastructure and strategy.



➤ WFP Rally in Chicago, IL

V. HAROLD WASHINGTON FOR MAYOR



➤ Harold Washington running for mayor [1982]

Building Base to Lead a Constituency and Building Multi-racial Working Class Majority

In 1983, Harold Washington became the first Black mayor of Chicago. The story of what it took for him to come to power clarifies just how important it is to both build a deep base in our core constituencies and to build broader alliances across constituencies.

Before running for mayor, Harold Washington was already a well-known politician in Chicago's Black community. But - in a city that had been so profoundly dominated by a powerful white-led political machine for decades - it would be an uphill battle for Washington to win the mayoral seat. But there were three factors that opened the possibility of his success:

- [1] First, there was a political opening because of a split in the white Democratic vote.
- [2] Second, organizers in the Black community built a demonstrably effective electoral power-building operation.
- [3] Third, there was a multi-racial coalition— including Mexican and Puerto Rican voters as well as some white liberals— supporting Harold Washington's campaign.

Starting with the political opening: Harold Washington had two opponents in the Democratic primary, Jane Byrne (the sitting mayor) and Richard Daley, Jr., both of whom were white. Why did Democrats have such a split ticket? From 1955 through 1976, Chicago had the same mayor – Richard Daley – who had led an incredibly powerful political machine in the city, known as the “Daley machine.”¹ After he died, the machine fell into disarray. Jane Byrne, a white woman, ran as an anti-machine candidate, promising to challenge downtown and bring in neighborhood groups. But, once in office, she restored some old machine people to her administration and refused to respond to the demands of community groups. And she had real challenges managing the city. So Richard Daley's son— also named Richard Daley - stepped in to challenge her. This split in the white establishment created an opportunity for Harold Washington to come to power. The fact that Washington had two white opponents was crucial, because they split the white vote in the primary. Washington knew that this split would be a crucial opening that made it possible for him to win, but he also knew that it wasn't a *guarantee*.

He knew that it would take both deep power inside the Black community and a broader multi-racial coalition to bring the primary home. So—before he committed to enter the race—

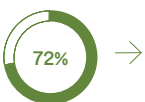
¹ The Daley machine had incorporated Black electeds and leaders (termed “Plantation politics”) and Latino electeds (“Hacienda politics”). A crucial part of the story about why the Daley machine decayed is that there was a crisis among his Black machine members. This is what allowed Harold to get support in his first run from the machine electeds (who would eventually usurp his legacy after he died).

he made demands on Black organizers in the city: they would first need to raise \$100,000 and register 50,000 new Black voters. In other words, he asked organizers to prove that they could build meaningful power in his core constituency before he would even agree to run. The “Draft Harold” effort generated a massive wave of grassroots activity in the Black community. Organizers doubled the number of voter registrations that Washington had demanded, bringing in more than 100,000 new voters.

This power in the Black community was central to Washington’s victory. In conversation with Black activists, he once said,

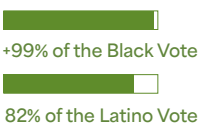
“If the people who believe in us will take it upon themselves to talk to other people, we can dispel this business about ‘I can’t win.’ We’ve got the votes out here. Why can’t I win? Except for saying that, ‘People won’t come out and vote.’ We have 670,00 Black registered voters in this city. Do you know how many votes I need to win this campaign and run away? Do you know how many I need? 450,000 votes, and I can walk in.” (DeVinney and Lacy 1990)

But, as central as it was, electoral power in the Black community would not be sufficient for Harold Washington to win in such a multiracial city. In the same speech, he said, “We have never argued that we want anything short of a coalition.” He found his primary coalition partners among the Latino organizers, who wanted to end the hacienda politics of the Chicago political machine. Building on years of “outsider” organizing, these organizers built electoral operations like the Independent Political Organization, rooted in the Mexican community of the Near West Side, and mobilizing in the Puerto Rican communities of the North Side. Washington also found slim support among some sections of white “lakefront liberals,” who were critical of machine politics in the city.



Of registered voters showed up at the polls in 1982 helping Washington win the mayoral primary.

Turnout in the hotly-contested primary was massive; seventy-two percent of registered voters came to the polls for the primary election. Washington won the primary by 33,000 votes, bringing in 85% of the Black vote, somewhere between 9 and 25% of the Latino vote and somewhere between 8 and 20% of the white “lakefront liberal” vote. Deep power in the Black community, combined with support from Latino and liberal white voters, brought home this historic win for Washington.



In Chicago, winning the Democratic primary would usually mean a candidate was a shoo-in to win the general election. But the white-led Democratic establishment decided to shift their support to the Republican nominee, Bernard Epton, whose slogan was “Epton, before it’s too late.” This didn’t stop Washington. The powerfully-organized base he had built in Black community and the growing base in Latino communities meant that even in the face of white Democratic defection, he was able to win the general election. Washington took more than 99% of the Black vote and 82% of the Latino vote (a notable expansion from the support he received in the primary), demonstrating that when you build a deep enough base in

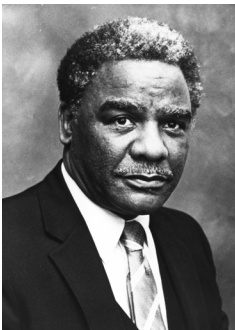
your core constituencies, your bloc can move from having the power of a swing vote to having the power of a deciding vote.

Unfortunately, winning the office of the Mayor wasn't enough for Harold Washington to be able to truly govern. A group of 29 white aldermen banded together to create a bloc to challenge him, voting down everything his administration tried to move, for years. But from the moment he was elected, Washington set out to change that equation. He invested in the work of building a multi-constituency bloc that would not only re-elect him in four years, but that would also win his administration a majority on the City Council. He was able to accomplish this in a few ways.

First, he **built relationships with community organizations**, neighborhood by neighborhood. Chicago is the home of Alinsky, and there were strong neighborhood organizations in almost every ward. Washington developed relationships and partnered with them to host public forums in each community. He built a particularly strong sphere of influence in Mexican and Puerto Rican communities, but he also went into the openly hostile territory of white, ethnic neighborhoods. Notably, he often went into wards where aldermen were opposing him, and he appealed directly to their voters. It was a tactic to create grassroots pressure on reactionary aldermen, and it made it possible for Washington to bring home some minor legislative wins and to set up for later electoral challenges in those wards.

Second, he **fought for and won tangible gains for the constituencies he represented**. In the early days of gentrification, Washington made significant commitments to redistribute resources away from the corporate real estate forces developing Chicago's downtown and toward working class communities that were struggling with de-industrialization. He used his power in city government to drive private investment toward meeting community needs, demonstrating a commitment to addressing issues that touched poor and working class voters, whether they were Black, Brown or white. By delivering on his vision in material ways, he laid a solid basis for a multi-racial working class coalition.

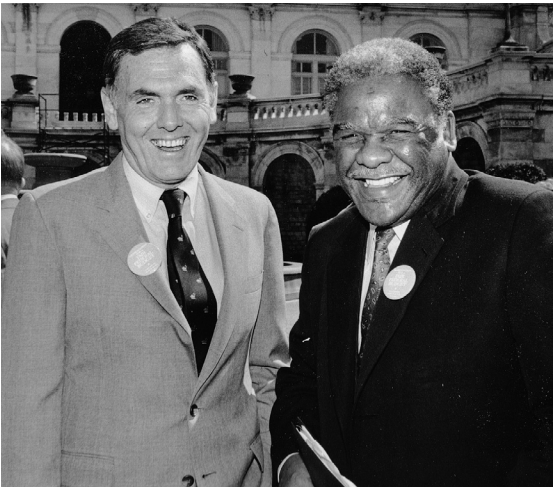
↙ Harold Washington [1982]



Finally, Washington's team built an organization called the Political Education Project, to **develop candidates and electoral capacity in the communities where he was building alliances**. This tactic was particularly effective. After winning a court challenge to racially gerrymandered maps, Washington's multiracial coalition was able to further consolidate political power in Black and Latino communities. Forcing a special election in 1986, they brought four new allied council members into office, including two council members in predominantly Black wards, Luis Guitierrez (representing a Puerto Rican ward) and Chuy Garcia (from a predominantly Mexican ward). These victories gave Washington his first majority on the City Council, albeit a narrow one which still required his vote as tiebreaker. But Washington could finally begin to really govern.



➤ Mayor Washington at Chicago's 16th Annual Gay & Lesbian Pride Parade



➔ Mayor Washington with the Mayor of Boston, Raymond L. Flynn [1985]



➤ Mayor Washington with Puerto Rican alderman, Luis Gutierrez [1986]

While these victories weren't built by a formal "strategic alignment" of organizations, Harold Washington built a de facto alignment of organizations that was designed to build a large enough multi-constituency bloc to win progressive control of the city council. In the 1987 election, Washington was re-elected, and his multi-racial coalition won a majority of city council seats. He was able to make some powerful early moves in this time, especially on affordable housing and immigration.



Tragically, seven months into his second term, Washington died from a massive heart attack. His coalition effectively collapsed shortly afterwards, and the political machine was able to quickly reassert its dominance. There is much to be learned from this history about the tenuousness of these kinds of political coalitions and what it would take to build a durable bloc. But still, Harold Washington permanently changed the political power equation in Chicago, shaking up machine politics and putting Black and Latino communities in a fundamentally different position to govern.

This case study drew heavily on three sources: **Gary Rivlin's** *Fire on the Prairie: Chicago's Harold Washington and the Politics of Race*, **Teresa Cordova's** "Harold Washington and the Rise of Latino Electoral Politics in Chicago," and the "**Back to the Movement**" episode of *Eyes on the Prize*. Much appreciation to **Rishi Awatramani** for his feedback on this case study, which improved it greatly. All errors and omissions remain our own.

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Highlighted Organizations

American Constitution Society is a progressive legal organization with over 200 chapters across American law schools.
www.acslaw.org

Centro De Trabajadores Unidos En La Lucha (CTUL) is a worker-led organization where workers organize, educate and empower each other to fight for a voice in their workplaces and in their communities.
www.ctul.net

Citizen Action of New York (CANY) is a grassroots membership organization taking on big issues that are at the center of transforming society.
www.citizenactionny.org

Colorado - 9to5 works to build a movement to achieve economic justice. Engaging directly affected women to improve working conditions.
www.citizenactionny.org

Colorado AFL-CIO is an organization made up of hardworking union members across 180 affiliate unions to build and maintain vital infrastructure, provide healthcare and work the essential jobs that keep CO moving.
www.coaflcio.org

Colorado Education Association (CEA) is a state-wide federation of teacher and educational workers' labor unions in the state of Colorado in the US.
www.coloradoea.org

Colorado People's Action is a member-driven, racial justice organization dedicated to building governing power in Colorado.
www.coloradopeoplesaction.org

Colorado Working Families Party is the official Colorado chapter of Working Families, dedicated to upholding progressive values through direct action and electoral victory.
www.workingfamilies.org/state/colorado

Colorado WINS is a union representing state employees to improve quality of services, safety, pay and benefits, working conditions, conflict resolution, staff attrition and to ensure an effective workforce to serve all Coloradans.
www.coloradowins.org

Communications Workers of America Union is the largest communications and media labor union in the US, representing about members in both the private and public sectors.
www.cwa-union.org

Data for Progress is a progressive think tank and polling firm arming movements with the tools they need to fight for a more equitable future.
www.dataforprogress.org

Democratic Socialists of America is the largest socialist organization in the United States.
www.dsasusa.org

Faith in Minnesota is a political home for people of faith who are acting boldly and prophetically to create a new, people-centered politics.
www.faithinmn.org

Florida For All is a statewide coalition fighting for an authentic democracy, an accountable justice system, and a fair and inclusive economy where we all have the freedom to live our own version of the American Dream.
www.floridaforall.vote

Social Movement Support Lab | IRISE, University of Denver is a lab with University of Denver working alongside communities fighting for racial justice.
www.operations.du.edu/irise/smsl

Invest in Our New York (IONY) is a state-wide effort to rebuild New York's economy.
www.investinourny.org

ISAIAH is multi-racial, state-wide, nonpartisan coalition of faith communities fighting for racial and economic justice in Minnesota.
www.isaiahmn.org

Land Stewardship Project fosters an ethic of stewardship for farmland, promoting sustainable agriculture and developing healthy communities.
www.landstewardshipproject.org

Million Voters Project is an alliance of 7 community-driven state and regional networks working to strengthen and expand democracy.
www.millionvotersproject.org

- Movimiento Poder** is a community-based organization led by working-class Latines fighting for collective liberation.
www.movimientopoder.org
- New York Working Families Party** a multi-racial, working class political party fighting for a New York for the many, not the few
www.workingfamilies.org/state/new-york
- SEIU** a union of about 2 million diverse members in healthcare, the public sector and property services who believe in and fight for our vision for a just society.
www.seiu.org
- SEIU Local 26** is Minnesota's Property Services Union over 92,000 members
www.seiu26.org
- SEIU Local 105** representing over healthcare, janitorial, security, and airport workers throughout the Colorado and the southwest.
www.seiu105.org/our-union
- SEIU Local 284** in K-12 schools across Minnesota, as well as adjunct faculty members at colleges and universities in the Twin Cities area.
www.seiu284.org
- Sunrise Movement** building a movement of young people to stop climate change & create millions of good jobs in the process.
www.sunrisemovement.org
- TakeAction Minnesota** is an independent, multiracial people's organization advancing democracy and justice.
www.takeactionminnesota.org
- Tending The Soil** is an alignment of five, power building non-profits and labor organizations representing Minnesotans led by working class, BIPOC community leaders with a long history of effective and equitable organizing.
www.tendingthesoil.org
- Together Colorado** is a nonpartisan, multi-racial and multi-faith community organization working to place human dignity center in CO.
www.togethercolorado.org
- United for a New Economy** is a multiracial community organization building people power and developing leaders in to create a thriving economy in Colorado.
www.unecolorado.org

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Citizens United; 59, 69	SEIU Local 1021; 20
CTUL; 13, 61	SEIU Local 26; 18, 52
Eastman Child; 48	Sunrise Movement; 71, 72
Faith in Minnesota; 55, 68	TakeAction Minnesota; 54
Fast Families; 65	Teaching American History; 12
Fibonacci Blue; 49, 55	Tending the Soil; 58, 60
FL Rights Restoration Coalition; 69, 70	The Congressional Progressive Caucus; 66
IONY; 84	Together Colorado; 76
Land Stewardship Project; 53	Vote Our Future; 55
Library of Congress; 12	WikiCommons; 88, 90, 91, 91, 107
Lorie Shaull; 57	Working Families Party; 86, 87
Mark Dixon; 51	
Million Voters Project; 63	
Patrick Perkins; 78	
People's Unity Platform Mayoral Forum; 72	
SEIU; 60, 74	

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Dan McGrath is a Senior Strategist at Grassroots Power Project with more than 20 years of community, labor and organizing experience. He served as the founding Executive Director of TakeAction Minnesota and as Executive Director of Progressive Minnesota. He organized school bus drivers with SEIU International and has worked on numerous issue and electoral campaigns. Dan's international experience includes work at the Glenree Centre for Reconciliation in the Republic of Ireland, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and as an election observer in El Salvador.

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Grassroots Power Program is a project of Tides Advocacy and works with advocacy and electoral organizations, as well as philanthropic entities and individuals to develop strategic practices to achieve transformational social change. We use a variety of strategic frameworks and tools to support organizations and donors to be more effective and ambitious. Our frameworks facilitate a shift away from short-term, incremental campaigns and towards building and wielding governing power to achieve economic, racial, gender and environmental justice. // tidesadvocacy.org

Grassroots Power Project (GPP) believes structural transformation of our society is crucial. Stronger, more strategic community and labor organizing formations will help undo the damages of neoliberalism and racial capitalism. GPP works with organizations, alliances and labor to develop new organizing practices to achieve transformational social change. Through decades of partnership with grassroots groups, we have developed a series of strategic frameworks. These tools support organizations to be more effective and ambitious. // grassrootspowerproject.org

GOVERNING POWER