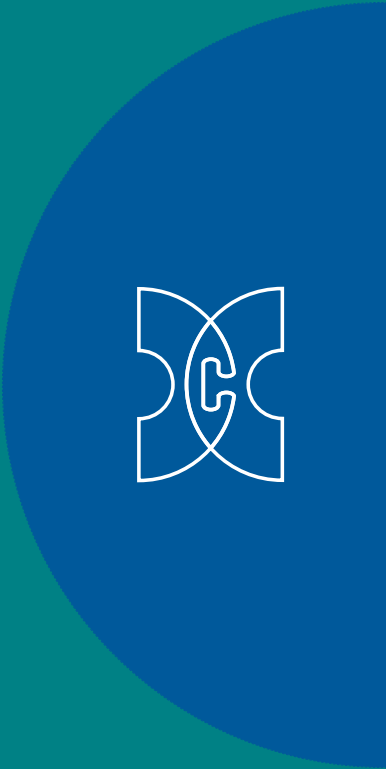



The Ford Foundation



**Collaborations that Count**  
*Working for Democracy in Devolutionary Times*



**The expansion of the responsibilities of state governments presents new opportunities for local constituencies to be more directly involved in the democratic process, and highlights the challenges facing local and statewide organizations as they fashion state-level responses to devolution. There are growing needs for knowledge-building activities such as research on the potential effects of state policy on local communities, and fiscal analysis in the context of the state budgeting process. Stronger linkages between policy analysis and grassroots efforts to ensure citizen participation in the policy-making process, backed by support for organizational development, financial management, organizing strategies, media and other skills are critical to the long-term survival of community groups and coalitions.**

◆ *Farm worker housing  
in Washington State.*



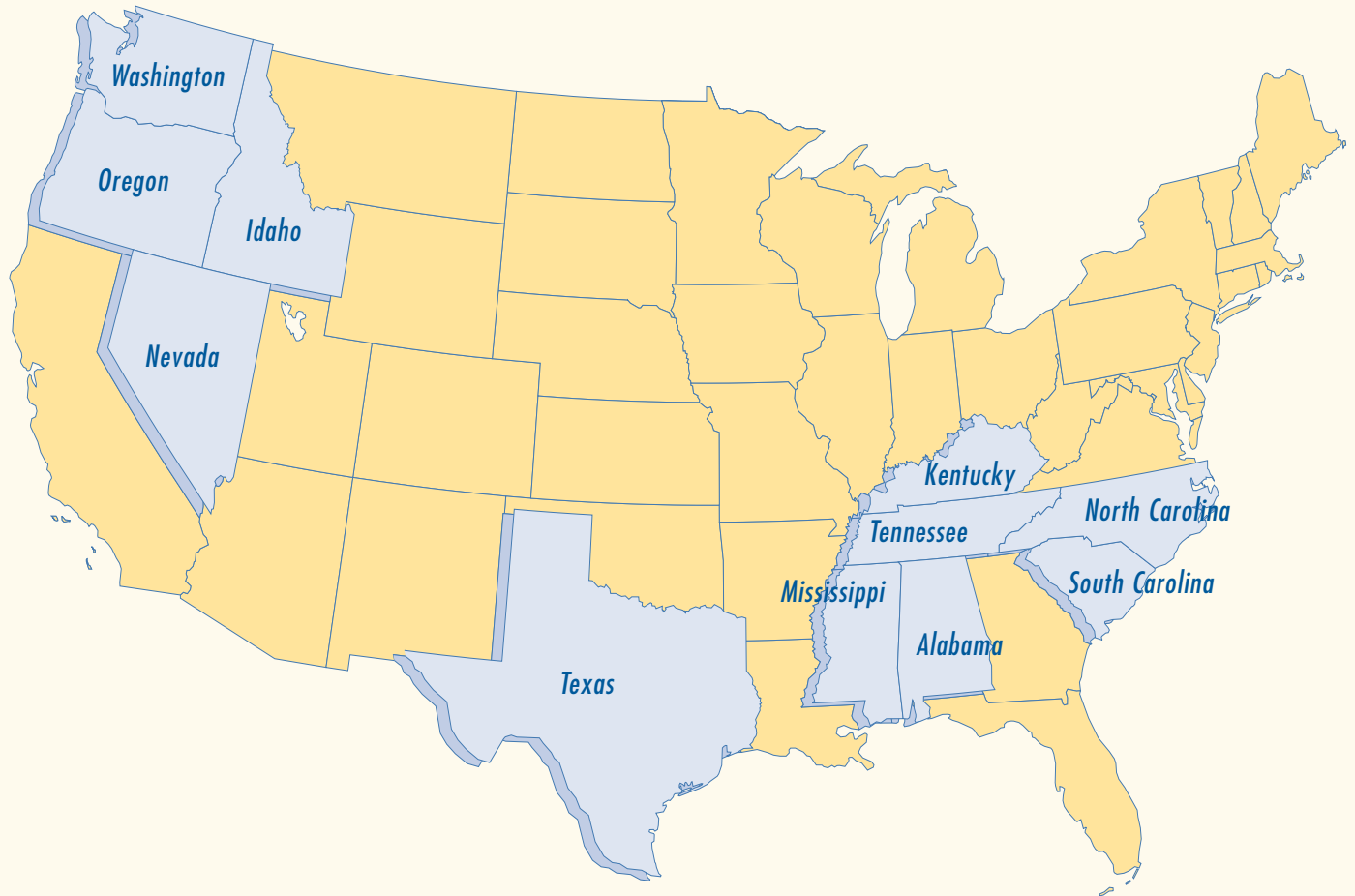
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# Collaborations that Count

## *Participating States*



### **Northwest**

- Idaho*
- Nevada*
- Oregon*
- Washington*

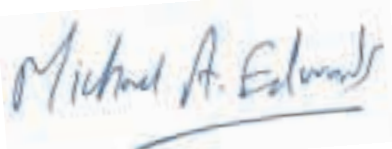
### **South**

- Alabama*
- Kentucky*
- Mississippi*
- North Carolina*
- South Carolina*
- Tennessee*
- Texas*

**A**s political authority is devolved to the state arena, it is ever more important that the perspectives of low-income and other vulnerable populations are properly represented in the political process at the state level. To help in this process, the Ford Foundation has created *Collaborations that Count: Working for Democracy in Devolutionary Times*, an initiative that aims to promote a more inclusive democratic process and achieve equitable policy outcomes at the state level by building the capacity of key organizations and strengthening the links between policy analysis and community organizing. Community organizations and policy groups are encouraged to work together to build coalitions for greater effectiveness in state policy debates. Grassroots organizations enhance their work with a better grasp of policy issues, while policy-research groups work more closely with grassroots organizations to learn from their experience and disseminate information on complex issues through public education campaigns and training.

*Collaborations that Count: Working for Democracy in Devolutionary Times* is a collaborative effort among several program staff in the Governance and Civil Society Unit in New York (GCS). The Initiative was developed in response to the Program Vice President's call for proposals that address the challenges of decentralization and devolution, building from ongoing GCS activities such as work on state fiscal analysis and civic and political participation. The Initiative takes advantage of the potential for community empowerment under devolution, and invests in long-term capacity building of key state-based organizations to engage more effectively in the policy arena. Policy analysis and citizen participation organizations are deliberately linked together in coalitions that elevate the profile of community organizing strategies in policy development. Thus far, the Initiative has coordinated grants to multi-issue collaborations in eleven states. Grantees are known for their success in building alliances, convening diverse constituencies, expanding political participation and developing policy research and analysis. In addition, the Foundation has provided grants to regional and technical assistance organizations to improve the technological capacity of grantees and support the overall aims of the Initiative.

These collaborations show how seemingly disparate organizations and interests can combine to generate unique value to democratic society. While their impact on state politics is not yet clear, stronger linkages between groups that emphasize citizen organizing and those that emphasize policy analysis and research should promote a more inclusive democracy and achieve improved outcomes for low-income populations. By bringing decision making closer to local communities, this Initiative can help to restore a vital connection to the political process. This is both the premise and the promise of *Collaborations that Count: Working for Democracy in Devolutionary Times*.



Michael A. Edwards  
Director, Governance and Civil Society





◆ *Left: Hollis Watkins, president and founder of Southern Echo, is a former member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the Civil Rights movement.*

◆ *Top right: Maureen O'Connell and Valerie Martin of Tennessee Partnership on Organizing and Public Policy.*

◆ *Bottom left: Scott Douglas, director of Greater Birmingham Ministries and Reggie James, director of Consumers Union Southwest regional Office.*

◆ *Bottom right: Bob Fulkerson, state director of Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada (PLAN).*



# Collaborations that Count

## *Working for Democracy in Devolutionary Times*

For communities and advocates concerned with the plight of low-income families and the disadvantaged, sending a message to lawmakers used to mean building national coalitions and communicating with officials in Washington, D.C. Letter-writing campaigns, meetings with representatives or demonstrations invariably were directed at the national agenda, where most constituent issues were defined and addressed.

In recent years, however, state governments have assumed responsibility and authority for a number of issues that were once mostly located at the federal level, including the administration of welfare programs, job security, wage levels and benefits, and civil rights protections, including bilingual education programs and benefits for immigrants.

This “devolution” or decentralization of power from the federal government to the states has posed a number of challenges and opportunities. States are coping with more responsibilities and generally smaller block grants, severely curtailing their ability to address the needs of low-income families, the disabled and the elderly. In addition, well-financed special interest groups that have invested in legislative influence over the years dominate the policy agenda in many states, leaving those without financial leverage out in the cold. On the plus side, state governments, because they are closer to the communities they serve, are expected to do a better job of providing services to citizens. One thing is clear: it is important for the perspectives of low-income and other vulnerable populations to have a “place at the table” where issues and solutions affecting their lives are discussed.

To ensure that the voices of these citizens are heard and have an impact at the state-level, in September 1998 the Governance and Civil Society unit of the Ford Foundation created *Collaborations that Count*. To date, the Foundation has provided \$8.3 million to 11 organizations as leaders of state collaboratives, engaging a total of 37 groups in the Northwest and South. In addition, the

Foundation provided grants to regional and technical assistance organizations to improve the technological capacity of the grantees and support the overall aims of the initiative.

At the heart of the Initiative is the effort to join the different strengths of community organizations and policy groups to build coalitions that improve their effectiveness in state policy debates. Grassroots organizations enhance their work with a better grasp of the issues; research groups and other “think tanks” benefit by reaching a wider audience through public workshops, and gaining immediate feedback from the people most affected by the policies they propose, especially in areas such as tax reform, welfare-to-work programs, and public education.

It is not a simple partnership. Grassroots organizers and policy analysts often work in vastly different cultures, and bridging that gap means grappling with internal organizational issues, including shared leadership and decision-making.

In the profiles that follow, the people who comprise the *Collaborations that Count* talk about their efforts to expand political participation and develop policy research and analysis that speaks to the needs of their constituents. Many of them have extensive experience in bringing together diverse constituencies, urban and rural, and they constitute a formidable alliance in the continuing struggle for social justice.





# Alabama

“Building on what people know is very important.”

—*Scott Douglas*

Greater Birmingham Ministries, an inter-racial, interfaith group that has advocated on behalf of the poor for nearly 30 years, drew on its own extensive network of community organizations to make sure the transportation concerns of the disabled and senior citizens were represented as well.

State legislators tended to perceive transportation as only a black, urban issue, Forrister noted. Arise staff members put together a map that showed both urban and rural areas were poorly served. “It was not just a welfare reform issue, and the bill’s sponsors became educated,” Forrister said. Although the senate bill stalled in committee, Forrister said they plan to keep the pressure on the state legislature and continue to develop local constituencies for better public transportation.

“There are new coalitions around this issue,” said Scott Douglas director of Greater Birmingham Ministries. “Now we have rural advocates in the room. We convene all stakeholders, so we’re not at cross-purposes.”

Greater Birmingham Ministries helped develop the Alabama Organizing Project, which includes Arise, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, the Federation of Community Controlled Child Care Centers of Alabama and the Alabama Coalition Against Hunger. The Project has promoted a Quality of Life agenda to address housing, tax reform, public transportation and education reform.

Tax reform is not an easy issue to explain, but Arise held workshops around the state to illustrate how low-income families pay a higher percentage of their income in taxes than any other income group in the state. A family of four must pay income taxes if they earn only \$4,600 a year—a level that was set in 1934, during the

**W**hen Arise Citizens’ Policy Project held some 30 listening sessions on welfare reform around the state of Alabama, one issue kept cropping up among residents: transportation.

“What they most needed to comply with welfare-to-work was transportation,” said Kimble Forrister, state coordinator for Alabama Arise. “It was consistent across the board.” Alabama Arise, which comprises 140 religious and community member groups, created Arise Citizens’ Policy Project to generate greater community involvement in their public policy work.

Arise started a discussion group to hash out a strategy, and developed a statewide consensus that transportation was not just an urban issue, but was also important to white, rural residents.





◆ *Left: Kimble Forrister, state coordinator for Alabama Arise, with Scott Douglas, director of Greater Birmingham Ministries.*

◆ *Right: Arise Citizens' Policy Project held over 30 listening sessions on welfare reform around the state of Alabama.*

Depression. The state imposes a sales tax on groceries and other basic necessities, a regressive tax that takes another big chunk of poor people's salaries, compared to those who earn more. Moreover, property taxes in Alabama are the lowest in the country, but the poorest 20% pay a higher percentage of their income for property taxes than other groups.

Arise's proposals include adjusting the state's income tax so that higher income residents pay more, eliminating the state's 4% sales tax on food and over the counter medicine, and taxing services, such as dry-cleaning, which the well-to-do are more likely to use. At the end of each workshop, organizers lead participants in a letter-writing exercise to the editor of a newspaper or to a state representative.

"Building on what people know is very important," Douglas said. "Popular education is a good way to democratize the process, taking complex issues and making them accessible."

Last November, the organizations that make up the 11 state collaboratives gathered in Birmingham to share information, strategies and stories about the work they are doing across the country. Douglas was speaking specifically about Alabama when he welcomed the group to his city, but it was clear that he was expressing the hopes of all the people who had come together as part of *Collaborations that Count*.

"What we are trying to do here in Birmingham is to explore and deepen ways of activating and sustaining civic imagination, and build the vessels and organizing forms that carry that imagination to safe harbor," he said. "A place where people matter."

### **Alabama Organizing Project**

*Alabama Coalition Against Hunger*

*(Alabama Council on Human Relations)*

*Arise Citizens' Policy Project*

*FOCAL*

*(Federation of Community Controlled Child Care Centers of Alabama)*

*Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund  
Greater Birmingham Ministries*

# Idaho



**“We have to create the internal model for democracy if we are to create it externally.”**

—Jen Ray

ICAN is a traditional membership organization that offers a food bank and other services to low-income families. “The collaborative has allowed us to mix organizing styles,” said Kevin Borden of ICAN. “People who come in for our food program also find out about other issues, such as access to health care, and participate in the organizing committees.”

Although organizations working on similar concerns are aware of each other, it does not necessarily follow that they coordinate their efforts. Borden said the collaborative has made a difference in that regard. “You can get so busy on your stuff, you can forget there are other people out there,” he said. “It forces our hand to work together.”

Partnerships take work, however, and Ray said it is necessary to look inward to make sure that the groups are effective in their joint efforts.

“Examining what it takes to change the culture of organizations means examining what creates barriers, including language, shared leadership, and the process of decision-making,” Ray said. “We have to create the internal model for democracy if we are to create it externally.”

One of their most important tasks is to dispel myths about the state’s poor and low-income families. Idaho is 92% white and 6.7% Hispanic, many of whom are Mexican-Americans working in the sugar beet fields. Ray said the collaborative is working to raise awareness about the living conditions of farm workers, who are excluded from minimum wages. “It’s dangerous labor, involving the entire family to make living wages,” she said.

Borden said Hispanic families also face barriers in their attempt to access the state’s health insurance program for children. “Hispanic fami-

**P**overty in Idaho, a largely rural state, is not easily visible, but the signs are there for all who care to look closely. For Jen Ray, director of the Idaho Women’s Network Research and Education Fund, one of the most telling signs is at food distribution points. There has been a significant increase in the number of people using food banks — especially women and children.

The Women’s Network is a coalition of 26 organizations defending reproductive choice, civil rights and economic justice. As part of *Collaborations that Count*, it has joined with the Idaho Community Action Network (ICAN) and United Vision for Idaho to increase citizen participation, and to expand work toward more humane welfare reform and related social policies.





◆ *Left: Announcing a group fast in support of the farm worker's minimum wage bill in Nampa, ID.*

◆ *Middle and right: Members of the IWN, ICAN, and UVI marching for farm worker's rights in Boise, Idaho, on Martin Luther King, Jr., Day.*

lies are required to provide birth certificates for everyone, and have three face-to-face meetings to obtain benefits,” he said. ICAN made sure that bilingual health information was available through the state Department of Health and Welfare, and is now working with the Women’s Network to ensure that low-income families have access to child care. “Now we’ll be able to identify barriers to access,” he said. “The Women’s Network has a good history of the issue, and they’re looked at as a leader on the issue in the state.”

*Collaborations that Count* enabled the Women’s Network, ICAN and United Vision for Idaho to conduct a poll about the state’s social welfare policies, and found that Idahoans cared about the problems facing poor and low-income families, but they wanted a focus on people, not programs. “The poll helped us cut through assumptions, and articulate a values approach about our agenda,” Ray said. “Painting a Picture of Poverty in Idaho” and “Beyond Welfare Reform” are just two of the publications published by ICAN and United Vision for Idaho that attempt to tell the human story behind welfare reform, health care and similar issues that affect the lives of the working poor and unemployed.

“We’re putting a face on these issues with real stories about real people.” In this way, Ray said they can effectively correct the misimpression that welfare reform has “solved” poverty, and can describe how some state laws exclude from benefits those who need them most, such as the state legislature’s proposal for a preschool program that would have excluded low-income children.

The collaborative faces numerous challenges in their efforts to build support for the programs

and services that will lift those most in need. Idaho is very states-rights oriented, Ray noted. It is one of nine states that does not match federal funds for Head Start. In addition to the “invisible” poor, the state has a highly visible radical right with a well-organized lobby in the state capital. According to Ray, they oppose using public funds for libraries, public television, public education, and similar uses.

But she added that there’s a “real sensitivity” among business and political leaders that such extreme views and policies may hurt the state’s chances of attracting much-needed industry. Linking the state’s own economic self-interest with social justice issues is one of the collaborative’s key strategies.

“We want to move out of the rhetoric and stereotypes, beyond fears,” Ray said. “We don’t want to be known as the hate state. This initiative is an incredible opportunity to advance that agenda.”

### Idaho Collaboration

*Idaho Women’s Network Research and Education Fund  
Idaho Community Action Network  
United Vision for Idaho*



# Kentucky

“We’re seeking regulations and environmental controls.”

—Burt Lauderdale

community and the consumer,” said Deborah Webb, Executive Director of the Community Farm Alliance, one of the member organizations of the *Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance*, which has made industrial farming one of its top priorities. Webb said that by organizing in their local communities, farmers and other citizens blocked some proposed factory farms and passed local ordinances to help keep others out.

The Alliance also helped derail the efforts of corporate agriculture to pave the way for the expansion of industrial farming in the state. “Kentucky is the only state with full corporate integrator liability that holds companies jointly liable for environmental problems,” said Webb. “Our efforts mean that we still have this all-important regulation. We must maintain these regulations so that companies can no longer contract away their environmental responsibilities.”

The Alliance was established in the first year of *Collaborations that Count* and is composed of five organizations: the Kentucky Coalition and the Community Farm Alliance, both community organizing groups; the Democracy Resource Center and Kentucky Youth Advocates, both of which conduct research and analysis; and Appalshop, which specializes in media and communications.

“We built the Alliance because we believe that to win we need to work together,” said Earl Wilson, chairperson of the Kentucky Coalition. “The Alliance gives us the ability to go beyond anything we could do separately, both in terms of scale and strategy.”

During the first year, the Alliance established three policy priorities: economic development policy reform, industrial agriculture, and welfare

**L**arge-scale industrial farming has had a devastating impact on the environment and economies of many communities in the Southeast. In Kentucky and other parts of the region, the scenario unfolds something like this: With the help of millions of dollars in state incentives, a major agricultural corporation moves into a farming community and establishes a processing plant. Farmers are then contracted to raise the company’s animals to supply the plants; in Kentucky, usually chickens. The farmers are not independent contractors but captive providers for the corporation, which makes most of the decisions while the farmer takes all the risks. Jobs in the plants are low-paying, require long hours, and expose workers to substantial health risks.

“This new agriculture threatens the local and state economy, the environment, the family farming





◆ *The Alliance hosted the “Reality Check” forum for members to speak out against the inequities of welfare reform.*

reform. At the center of the Alliance’s first year of work was an effort to reform Kentucky’s economic development system, based upon the belief that the state should pursue development projects that are community-based and environmentally sound.

The Democracy Resource Center analyzed how state funds have been used to subsidize corporations and how economic development projects are selected without public participation, and published a report with proposals to improve the ways in which projects are developed.

“Short-term, we are challenging the dominant frame by demanding corporate disclosure and reporting, and requiring standards for wages, working conditions, and environmental practices,” said Jason Bailey of the Democracy Resource Center. “Long-term, we want to create a comprehensive economic development program that emphasizes locally-controlled, democratically planned, community-based projects and economically and environmentally sustainable businesses.”

A new program would alter the economic development landscape in Kentucky. In recent years Kentucky passed out incentive packages to huge corporations, sometimes in excess of one million dollars in incentives per new job promised. Instead, the Alliance wants the state to offer training, marketing, financing, or other supports for efforts like Mountain Traditions Herb Cooperative or the Organic Kentucky Producers Association. These two citizen-based cooperatives, started with the support of the Kentucky Coalition and the Community Farm Alliance respectively, provide a different approach to sustainable job creation and economic development.

“Without the Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance we could not have coordinated the research, policy development, organizing, and media work that we have done on economic development policy,” said Earl Wilson of the Kentucky Coalition. “We are going to bring that same effective combination to the whole set of economic justice issues we face here.”

### **Kentucky Economic Justice Alliance**

- Appalshop*
- Community Farm Alliance*
- Democracy Resource Center*
- Kentucky Coalition*
- Kentucky Youth Advocates*

# Mississippi

## Quality Education, a Right not a Privilege...

—*Citizens for Quality Education*

**T**he “War Room” and the “Room of Doom” might sound like video games, but they are in fact a frightening reality for many students in the Mississippi Delta. Corporal punishment is still common in many schools in the region, and middle-and high-school students who misbehave are taken to these aptly-named rooms, where they are paddled and sometimes severely beaten, said Leroy Johnson, executive director of *Southern Echo*.

“It’s supposed to be the last resort, but it’s often the first recourse,” Johnson said. Critics of corporal punishment — which is legal in Mississippi — say young African-American males who are at-risk of dropping out and special education students are especially singled out for harsher disciplinary measures. Parent organizations, such as the Indianola Parent Student Group, say that paddling is often the first step in a child’s suspension, expulsion or transfer to alternative schools, in order to eliminate a low-performer from the school average.

The Indianola group is one of six organizations working with Southern Echo as part of *Collaborations that Count*. Southern Echo has a long history of providing leadership development,

education and training to grassroots leaders. Its president and founder is Hollis Watkins, a former leader of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee during the Civil Rights movement. The other partners include Citizens for Quality Education/Holmes County, Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County, Tallahatchie Education and Redistricting Committee, the Drew Community Voter’s League, and up to 20 other community-based organizations that together comprise the Mississippi Education Working Group. The group is pooling their resources to impact public policy on education.

Southern Echo is helping these organizations develop their individual strengths, work together on common issues, and conduct their own policy research. Members participate in residential training schools and workshops and receive technical and legal assistance. The Harvard Civil Rights Project and the Advancement Project, working through Southern Echo, also provide legal assistance and policy analysis when necessary.

The Indianola Parent Student Group documented cases of paddling of special education students and worked with their collaborative partners to research laws and regulations. Their









research found that teacher quality was at the heart of the problem. Long-term substitute teachers who are not certified are employed in many Delta schools, which have a hard time attracting certified teachers because salaries are low.

With this data in hand, the Mississippi collaborative opened negotiations with state and local education officials about conditions in the schools, and some student records were cleared of disciplinary incidents. The chairwoman of the state senate education committee has promised to hold hearings on corporal punishment, and state officials are considering measures to implement teacher training and supervision, and to attract quality teachers by providing housing and increasing teacher pay.

Corporal punishment is just one of the education issues that have galvanized parent groups in Mississippi. A forum called “Quality Education, a Right not a Privilege,” held by Citizens for Quality Education/Holmes County on a Saturday in January 2000 drew parents from across the state, including some who traveled for three hours or more.

Ellen Reddy, co-coordinator of Citizens for Quality Education/Holmes County, said her organization has been working on education issues since 1996, first bringing recreational and after-school tutoring programs to five school districts in Holmes County. “We discovered that students were dropping out because their needs weren’t being addressed,” she said. “We provide leadership training for parents, to be better advocates for their children.”

“We have to break the cycle of uninvolved, and the causes of their uninvolved,” Reddy said. “It’s our right to participate in our children’s education.”

The collaborative has enabled the Citizens group to strategize with parent organizations in other counties as well, which Johnson called a significant development. “County lines are like the Berlin Wall,” he said. “You have folks who are born and die and never leave their county.”

These alliances are critical in a state where the disparities in per student funding are vast. Johnson said that prior to the Mississippi Education Funding Act, which passed the state legislature in 1997, Tallahatchie County averaged \$742 per pupil, compared to Rankin County, which averaged \$7,000 per pupil. Although Tallahatchie County schools saw an increase to \$3,200 since 1997, there is still a long way to go, Johnson said. Their strategy of working across county lines, to involve the wealthier counties in the network, ensures that communities will be united rather than pitted against one another.





◆ *Southern Echo provides leadership and advocacy training for parents and students.*



### **Southern Echo**

*Citizens for Quality Education  
Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County  
Drew Community Voter's League  
Indianola Parent Student Group  
Mississippi Education Working Group  
Tallahatchie Education and Redistricting Committee*

Another important aspect of the collaborative's work is helping parents to value their own opinions about what constitutes a quality education for their children.

"There are a lot of local training and parent meetings to ascertain what's going on in their school districts," Johnson said. "We'll have three or four walls of butcher paper, writing down what they say, and they see that what they're saying makes sense, compared to state policies.

"It is a sea change and a cultural change, being able to say, 'These are our needs, and this is the remedy.'"

# Nevada

**“We have an interest in keeping children fed, seeing Nevadans paid a decent wage with job security...”**

—*Robert Fulkerson*

**W**hen an explosion at a chemical plant outside of Reno killed four workers in 1998, the *Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada* (PLAN) joined two of its member groups, Latinos for Political Education and Alliance for Workers Rights to draw attention to the need for better workplace safety regulations. The plant had no business license, no fire inspections in five years and almost no building permits since 1974. None of the safety instructions were posted in Spanish, although most of the workers were from Mexico. Together, the three organizations helped create momentum for change that led to state laws strengthening regulations in facilities where dangerous substances are made or stored.

Robert Fulkerson, executive director of PLAN, said the group was formed in 1994 in response to a state legislative session that saw many progressive issues removed from the agenda. PLAN, which now has 42 member organizations, provides a structure for diverse organizations to come together for mutual support and to plan for the future. PLAN staffers research issues that member organizations discuss at annual retreats; usually the top five issues identified at the retreat are placed on the PLAN agenda.

“During our first four years, PLAN addressed issues related to citizen participation and campaign finance reform,” Fulkerson said. “Our ten-year plan calls for deeper involvement in economic justice, including health care, and building just and sustainable communities. We have an interest in keeping children fed, seeing Nevadans paid a decent wage with job security, protecting a woman’s right to choose and in ensuring an ordinary citizen’s right to hold elected office.”

*Collaborations that Count* has enabled PLAN to expand its staff with a field organizer, who works with members of the collaborative “to do more intensive cross-pollination of our issues,” Fulkerson said. “It’s a way to bring their issues to the coalition, find common ground, and build work-plans.”

“We never had a policy analysis, research component,” he said. “It’s helping us develop more clear and proactive ideas on how the state collects money and how we spend that money, from the perspective of the least politically powerful, the poor and other disenfranchised groups.” Health care reform is part of their focus. The number of people in Nevada without health insurance is among the highest in the nation, Fulkerson noted.





PLAN worked with a former state budget director to develop an alternative state budget, and to analyze trends in spending and revenue. “There’s a real learning curve that has to take place in our state, we’re learning so much about the impact on the environment, seniors, and minority health,” Fulkerson said. The PLAN board is also conducting a study and a community education campaign on urban sprawl, to examine its impact on the environment and central city residents, and to propose solutions that include revenue sharing and better mass transportation.

Although PLAN initially was known for its community advocacy, it is now also highly regarded for its nonpartisan research. The group publishes reports, updated every few years, that receive extensive media coverage: *Jackpot*, which focuses on the sources and amounts of campaign contributions to candidates for the state legislature, and *Cashing In*, which relates campaign contributions to legislation passed in the next year. Fulkerson said the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, “the most conservative and largest newspaper in the state,” respects PLAN’s research and reputation, and uses the data that the PLAN staff compiles. “We get a lot of calls from the media that we didn’t get before,” Fulkerson said. “This initiative has helped us to develop institutional ideas and do our own internal education for our staff and member groups.”



## Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada

*ACLU, Nevada*  
*AFL-CIO of Nevada*  
*AFSCME International*  
*Alianza Latina*  
*Alliance for Workers Rights*  
*American Lands*  
*Citizen Alert*  
*Committee to Aid Abused Women*  
*Common Cause*  
*Culinary Workers Union Local #226*  
*Gay & Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada*  
*Great Basin Mine Watch*  
*HERE Local #86*  
*Laborers International Union of America #169*  
*Latinos for Political Education (LAPE)*  
*NAACP, Northern Nevada Chapter*  
*National Association of Social Workers-Nevada (NASW)*  
*Nevada Disability Forum*  
*Nevada Empowered Women’s Project (NEW Project)*  
*Nevada Lawyers for Progressive Policy*  
*Nevada Nurses Association*  
*Nevada State Education Association*  
*Nevada Trial Lawyers Association*  
*Nevada Urban Indians*  
*Nevada Wilderness Project*  
*Nevada Women’s Lobby*  
*Northern Nevada Building Trades Council*  
*Operating Engineers Local 3*  
*P-FLAG Reno/Northern Nevada*  
*Planned Parenthood Mar Monte of Northern Nevada*  
*Planned Parenthood of Southern Nevada*  
*Reno-Sparks Indian Colony*  
*Reno Gay Pride, Inc.*  
*Rural Alliance for Military Accountability (RAMA)*  
*SEIU Local #1107*  
*State of Nevada Employees Association (SNEA)*  
*Sierra Club, Toiyabe Chapter*  
*Sunrise Sustainable Resources Group*  
*Truckee Meadows Human Services Association*  
*Unitarian Universalists for Social Action, Reno*  
*Washoe Tribe of California and Nevada*

◆ *Left: Latinos for Political Education works with PLAN and its member organizations on citizenship and voter education.*

◆ *Right: PLAN convenes annual membership retreats for leadership development and skills-building combined with cultural activities.*

# North Carolina

“Working does not equal a livable wage when you’re earning \$5.15 an hour.”

—David Baker

**T**he Triangle area of North Carolina — Durham, Raleigh and Chapel Hill — has benefited enormously from the current economic boom, but as in other parts of the country, prosperity has been elusive for many low-skilled workers struggling to support their families on the minimum wage. The disparity in economic fortune was underscored in the aftermath of the 1999 hurricane and flood that left thousands homeless in the eastern region of the state.

That disaster prompted the first public organizing event for the *North Carolina Alliance for Economic Justice*. The Alliance sponsored a rally at the state capital to protest an inadequate recovery budget that would take scarce resources from other human service programs. Partners in the Alliance were able to claim a small victory: an additional \$10 million was obtained for renters who initially would have received a smaller amount of recovery funds. In addition, the Alliance was able to connect with other advocates for children and families.

The Alliance was created as part of *Collaborations that Count*, and is composed of eight organizations: North Carolina Justice and Community Development Center, the North Carolina Council of Churches, North Carolina Fair Share, North Carolina Equity, Southerners for Economic Justice, the Common Sense Foundation, the North Carolina Association of Community Development Corporations and the Institute for Southern Studies.

David Baker is coordinator for the Alliance, which is housed in the Justice Center in Raleigh. During a one-year planning period, the Alliance forged relationships and a strategic plan to create a statewide coalition to promote a living wage across the state.

The strategic plan’s mission is “to establish economic security for the poor and working poor of North Carolina by building an alliance of policy, grassroots and community organizations that will bring a powerful, progressive voice for the poor and underserved into the state’s policy arena and address the impacts of devolution.”

Three major goals are identified in the plan:

1. To ensure that disadvantaged people and the community-based organizations that represent them are heard in the political and economic process in order to achieve an equitable system that provides adequate resources for jobs, education, health care and other services.

2. To promote a sustainable and just economy that provides all people a living wage with benefits and resources needed to support work; has an adequate and comprehensive safety net to protect unemployed persons; provides access to wealth and equitably shared resources; and treats all individuals with dignity.





3. To promote understanding of Alliance issues and progressive agenda by ensuring that the news media comprehensively report local, state, and federal issues and present a progressive perspective; demonstrate how issues and policy decisions affect vulnerable people; and raise public awareness about the effects of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination on wages, the economy, and social conditions.

“Working collectively requires additional energy, and this grant enables us to collaborate more and do a better job at it,” Baker said. “It opens the door so each one can discuss how their work fits together.” For example, the Justice Center has done research for the Common Sense Foundation’s report, the *State of the Worker*; partners also share computer and other technology resources, which Baker said has made a big difference to groups that only have a one- or two-person staff.

The Alliance is monitoring activity in several cities where livable wage movements have shown results. “We’re going to learn from what they’ve done,” Baker said. Durham enacted a local living wage ordinance recently which covers 85 city workers, and both Greensboro and Asheville are close to enacting similar ordinances.

“In the Triangle area, especially, there’s a booming economy, but the gap is increasing between those doing well and those at the bottom of the economic ladder,” Baker said. “The minimum wage is not sufficient.”

Baker cited one study published in 1996 by Wider Opportunities for Women that found it would take more than \$15 an hour for one full-time worker to support a family of four.

“Working does not equal a livable wage when you’re earning \$5.15 an hour,” he said.

#### North Carolina Alliance for Economic Justice

*NC Equity*

*NC Fair Share*

*Southerners for Economic Justice*

*The Common Sense Foundation*

*The Institute for Southern Studies*

*The NC Association of Community Development Corporations*

*The NC Council of Churches*

*The NC Justice and Community Development Center*

◆ *Left: Debra Tyler-Horton and Cynthia Brown take a closer look at the Alliance power analysis map.*

◆ *Right: Rev. Collins Kilburn opens an Alliance meeting with a little singing and humor.*

# Oregon



“Waivers are granted to counties with high unemployment, and we determined that nearly all of rural Oregon would qualify...”

—Michael Leachman

**W**hen the Portland *Oregonian* ran an editorial on Oct. 20, 1999 titled, “We’re No. 1,” it wasn’t claiming bragging rights for the local athletic teams. The editorial pointed out that, despite having one of the country’s best economies, Oregon had the country’s highest percentage of hungry people.

The editorial cited a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) report, which found that an average of 5.8 percent of Oregon households went hungry in the three years ending in August 1998. Moreover, a total of 12.6 percent of Oregon households didn’t always have access to enough food to meet basic needs. The editorial also noted that participation by Oregonians in the food stamp program fell 22 percent in the three years ending July 1999.

For their first project under *Collaborations that Count*, the Taking Charge in Oregon Project decided to tackle the state’s hunger issue. Taking Charge is comprised of three grassroots organizations, the Rural Organizing Project, CAUSA and the Oregon Fair Share Research and Education Fund, and one policy research organization, the Oregon Center for Public Policy. Not surprisingly, food stamps became the focus of their first joint effort.

Under federal welfare regulations, able-bodied adults with no children at home are limited to food stamps only three months every three years. The restrictions hit the largely Latino migrant worker community especially hard. Of some 200,000 Latinos in the state — most of whom are Mexican-American — 150,000 are farm workers, said Ramon Ramirez, a board member of CAUSA, an immigrant rights organization. Many have work available to them only four or five months of the year, and must stretch their earnings to cover the months when they are out of work.

Michael Leachman, a policy analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy, said the Center knew that the U.S. Department of Agriculture allowed states to grant waivers to those restrictions. “Waivers are granted to counties with high unemployment, and we determined that nearly all of rural Oregon would qualify,” Leachman said. Plus, an additional pool of exemptions was available to exempt people living in the rest of the state. Because the state of Oregon had used so few of these exemptions, “an enormous stockpile” had accumulated. “This was another way to build pressure on them,” Leachman said. “We revealed that Oregon had 50,000 case months of





◆ *Left: Western States Center staff strategizing with Taking Charge in Oregon Project staff.*

◆ *Right: Taking Charge in Oregon Project staff and members.*

exemptions. And there are only 7,000 people in the state at most who might need the exemptions every month.”

The Rural Organizing Project (ROP) and CAUSA organized to put on the pressure for change. ROP sent 500 postcards from people all over the state to the governor’s office and to the Interagency Coordinating Council on Hunger, the committee charged by the governor with examining the issue. Feeling the pressure, Governor John Kitzhaber called a press conference in early March and agreed to make food stamp offices more accessible with weekend hours, and promised to place case workers on site at food banks and in other community locations. In late March, the state welfare agency finally agreed to use all available waivers and exemptions, and Governor Kitzhaber gave his support to the policy change. Another important victory, Leachman said, was that the governor agreed to increase the number of questions about hunger that are on the state’s population survey — to better identify who is hungry in Oregon. “The state population survey had only one general question about people’s food needs,” Leachman said. “The questions we proposed, which the governor agreed to use, are much more specific.”

Project partners are keeping a watchful eye on how well the state lives up to its word.

As a test case, Oregon Fair Share sent 25 people to enroll in the food stamp program in Portland and Medford, a smaller, more rural community. Their experience revealed that the food stamp program places numerous barriers in the paths of applicants. The report summarizing their findings received widespread press coverage,

and prompted the Interagency Coordinating Council on Hunger to consider implementing Fair Share’s recommendations to streamline the process.

Kelley Weigel, co-director of the Rural Organizing Project, said outreach efforts will also intensify. “The goal of the collaborative is to bring people affected by this issue to a place where they can help affect policy,” she said. “We’re trying to push for more benefits and expand enrollment in order to reverse this trend of more people being hungry more often.” Weigel said the members of the Taking Charge project will meet over the summer and fall to assess existing efforts and plan collective strategy. “The issue of hunger is a stepping stone to address the other problems of an unraveling safety net,” she said. “These first steps enable us to build leadership and get organizations to work together for future successes as well.”

For Ramirez, the effort to waive time limits for food stamp recipients had another beneficial impact. By showing that there was a surplus of labor that is idle for part of the year, CAUSA exposed the efforts of one Oregon senator who wanted to revive the “bracero” or contract labor program that would have brought in cheaper labor from Mexico to deal with a so-called “labor shortage.”

“We affected public policy on a local and national level,” Ramirez said.

### **Taking Charge in Oregon Project**

*CAUSA*

*Oregon Center for Public Policy*

*Oregon Fair Share Research and Education Fund*

*Rural Organizing Project*



# South Carolina



“If we can educate people about the importance of the census and redistricting, it will give the communities the opportunity to get the resources they need...”

—Mildred Meyers

**R**ace took center stage when the U.S. presidential primary was held in South Carolina early in 2000. The Confederate flag flying over the statehouse and the ban on interracial dating at a private university — later lifted — sparked heated but short-lived discussions. However, the impact of race on state policies, and the effect of those policies on the lives of African-American residents, was largely ignored.

African-Americans comprise at least 40% of the population in 20 of South Carolina’s 46 counties, but legislative districts are mapped in ways that diffuse their ability to leverage their numerical strength for greater representation and more funding for schools and other vital services.

The *South Carolina Policy Organizing Project* has made the 2000 U.S. Census a priority to ensure a state legislature that is truly representative and responsive to the needs of all South Carolinians. In addition, the project has commissioned a study to identify Latino communities where they can target their outreach and organizing activities.

“If we can educate people about the importance of the census and redistricting, it will give the communities the opportunity to get the

resources they need and direct how these resources should be used,” said Mildred Meyers, the director of South Carolina Environmental Watch. “And they’ll also be able to question in an intelligent fashion any problems that may arise in the census.” Community members are being encouraged to take jobs as census takers, and the Project is hoping to identify people who can be trained as demographers, she added.

As part of the Project, the environmental group has joined with the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment, South Carolina United Action and South Carolina Fair Share Education Fund. Although each of the member groups work on different issues, they have found common cause in promoting the census. “It touches all of us in our various areas of work,” Meyers said.

“Environmental toxic waste is our main issue, but we take the position that infrastructure is also important, such as schools, roads and development.”

Charles Taylor is director of the Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment, whose membership is primarily low-wage workers who are not represented by unions. The Alliance is the lead group in the Project, which Taylor said is modeled on the efforts of Southern Echo in





Mississippi. “As a result of their community organizing efforts following the 1990 census, the number of Mississippi’s African-American legislators doubled from 21 to 42,” Taylor said.

To build a network to communicate the importance of the census, the Project conducted a county-by-county inventory of grassroots groups, many of which were formed around a single issue and have a small but active membership. “They’re in really rural sections like Williamsburg and Darlington, and they vary in size,” Taylor said. Some are civil rights groups from the 1960s, or church committees that do work in the community. “Now we have a list of organizations that have not been on anybody’s map,” he said. “It might be a group that popped up on a school board fight, or to fight a waste incinerator. They have meager resources, so we’ll be training them on the redistricting process and the importance of the census.”

Education is a major issue and the Project will tie a better headcount to more funding for the schools. According to Taylor, numerous private schools opened in the wake of desegregation in the 1970s, leading to re-segregation of the public schools, where the predominately African-American student body is taught by a largely white teaching staff. Taylor said administrators are quick to label unruly students and transfer them to inferior alternative schools that do not identify problems or offer remedies that might help return students to regular classrooms.

“We need more analysis around race in school and in state policy to ensure equal education, and to make sure African-American children aren’t forced out of the system,” Taylor said.

There has also been an “exponential explosion” in the state’s Latino population. About 50,000 or 1.3 percent of the state’s population of 3.8 million are Latino; half are Mexican and about 15 percent are Puerto Rican. “We’re mapping the Latino population for the first time,” Taylor said. South Carolina has always been in the migrant stream, but now “people are stopping and staying.”

Many of the new Latino residents have established service organizations through their churches, to help them deal with day to day issues, Taylor noted, but they are not politically organized. By linking with the efforts of the Project, they will be able to expand their influence and make sure the needs of their community are addressed. Ultimately, “our goal is to get progressive groups to work together, and to create a progressive policy agenda,” Taylor said.

The way the Project is constructed enables groups to build “from the bottom up, not the top down,” says Mildred Meyers. “The Project gives us a means of going into the community, and getting them to really think about their issues and put them on the table.”

### **South Carolina Policy Organizing Project**

*Carolina Alliance for Fair Employment  
South Carolina Environmental Watch  
South Carolina Fair Share Education Fund  
South Carolina United Action*

◆ *Through organized rallies, the SC Policy Organizing Project has been educating local communities about the 2000 U.S. Census.*



# Tennessee



“Now we know where we’re starting from,  
and where we need to build.”

—Maureen O’Connell

**F**or families in Tennessee struggling to make ends meet, there are many challenges: the state lost thousands of manufacturing jobs in the 1990s, only to be replaced by low-paying service and retail jobs. The state ranks 45th in the quality of life for children, according to the Children’s Defense Fund, with a per capita spending on education that is consistently in the bottom five or six states. Because there is no state income tax, Tennessee relies heavily on a sales tax on food and other necessities to generate revenue, hitting the poor the hardest. Those seeking temporary government assistance have found the struggle to support their families especially challenging. Tennessee was among the first states to introduce welfare reform, with an 18-month limit on benefits — among the most severe time limits to be found anywhere in the country. For many families, this time limit has begun to expire. The state also ranks third in the nation for the amount of toxic materials released in the atmosphere, and not surprisingly, a high number of polluting industries are located in or near the poorest communities.

To address these issues and improve the quality of life for those affected by them, the *Tennessee Partnership on Organizing and Public Policy* was

created as part of *Collaborations that Count*. The partnership includes the Save Our Cumberland Mountains Resource Project, the Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network, MANNA, an anti-hunger organization, Solutions to Issues of Concern to Knoxvilleans, Tennesseans for Fair Taxation, the Tennessee Justice Center, JONAH (Just Organized Neighborhood Area Headquarters), an African-American community organization in West Tennessee, the Tennessee Health Care Campaign, and Tennessee Citizen Action Alliance.

“This whole constellation of groups is working together for the first time,” said Maureen O’Connell, director of Save Our Cumberland Mountains Resource Project and a member of the partnership’s steering committee. “We’re asking ‘what makes the state tick, and what is our strength?’”

There has been no shortage of issues to consider. “Our state is in fiscal crisis,” O’Connell said, referring to the lack of a state income tax, and the sales taxes that place a disproportionate burden on those who can least afford it. Tennessee also has “a tremendous number of people” without health insurance, she noted, and a welfare program that, while imposing an 18-month limit on benefits, also fails to provide adequate funds for transportation and child-care that would enable recipients to apply for the jobs that are available.

“There is a plethora of possibilities, and we are examining which issue or what constellation of issues would be the most strategic and have the most impact,” she said.

The Tennessee partnership received one of two *Collaborations that Count* planning grants (North Carolina was the other) for an 18-month period





- ◆ *Top left: A SOCM press event dramatizes the regressive impact of a high state food tax.*
- ◆ *Top right: A SOCM press event highlighting child care.*
- ◆ *Bottom right: The Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network rally for a livable wage.*

ending in March 2000. During that period, the partnership established its governance and decision-making structure, undertook a power analysis of the state and held workshops on analyzing the state’s economy, increasing participation of people of color, building political power at the state level, building relations with labor and mapping alliances across the state. In addition, the partnership conducted a technology assessment and developed a strategic work plan. For O’Connell, the working relationships that were established as part of the planning process are critical for the work that lies ahead. “Good relationships and analysis are key,” she said. “We want to keep people engaged in the issues and debates, and make sure it’s not a top-down hierarchy.”

During the next year, the partnership will hire a full-time coordinator, emphasizing outreach. “Some areas of the state are underrepresented in the current partnership, and we’re targeting those areas,” she said. “There will be an assessment of who is out there, and we will be listening to what people have to say about issues around the state.” Simultaneously, within the partnership, two internal committees will be

launched, devoted to issues and membership. The issues committee will target the issue or first set of issues that the partnership will take on, developing criteria for making those decisions, conducting research and listening to those other areas. The membership committee will explore “who else is out there, who can be included,” with an eye toward increasing the diversity of the partnership to reflect African-American and Latino communities and their concerns, as well as other underrepresented constituencies.

O’Connell said the process has been sobering, not just in terms of identifying the problems, but in assessing what it will take for the partnership to be an effective force for change in the state. “There’s a lot more needed, we’re not enough,” she said. “But now we know where we’re starting from, and where we need to build.”

### Tennessee Partnership on Organizing and Public Policy

JONAH

MANNA

*Save Our Cumberland Mountains Resource Project*

*Solutions to Issues of Concern to Knoxvillians*

*Tennesseans for Fair Taxation*

*Tennessee Citizen Action Alliance*

*Tennessee Health Care Campaign*

*Tennessee Industrial Renewal Network*

*Tennessee Justice Center*

“People don’t need to be led,  
they need the tools to effect change.”

—David Arizmendi

In a state as big as Texas, communication is vital for groups trying to connect and join forces on issues of common interest. ProTex: Network for a Progressive Texas, a network of policy and grassroots organizations, provides an infrastructure to support the formation of coalitions statewide.

“We bring people together from around the state,” said Tricia Forbes, director of the Austin-based ProTex, which was created with funding provided by *Collaborations that Count*. In addition to fostering the creation of coalitions, ProTex provides grassroots organizations with training, information about funding sources and policy analyses on issues such as criminal justice reform, health care, and the environment. “Through e-mail discussion lists, people from all over the state can join in the discussion,” Forbes said.

For Reggie James, director of the Southwest regional office of Consumers Union, ProTex is the missing link in the Lone Star state. “What was missing in Texas was the resources devoted to the nuts and bolts of building coalitions,” he said. “ProTex helps organizations get set up, cover costs and do leg work.”

Consumers Union is one of 17 organizations represented on the ProTex board. “As a network, ProTex is fluid and infinite. A health care coalition may have 100 groups involved. That’s where we’re going to have change happen,” James said.

ProTex is already beginning to have an impact in the state. The criminal justice reform coalition convened by ProTex has attracted the support of the Public Welfare Foundation, which awarded the coalition a one-year grant to conduct regional organizing meetings, build up membership, and begin developing plans for a public education campaign and legislative agenda. Forbes said the coalition is examining the death penalty, access to legal representation and conditions of incarceration, and other justice-related issues.

ProTex board members include smaller grassroots organizations such as the Texas chapter of ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), and *Iniciativa Frontera*, based some six hours south of Austin. Leaders of both organizations say ProTex provides a critical connection.

“For us it’s a great opportunity to know what’s going on around the state and who we should be working with,” said Liz Wolff, ACORN’s lead organizer, who works out of a Dallas office. Having access to existing budget analysis means ACORN, which has a statewide membership of 6,000, does not have to reinvent the wheel on every issue. “Everyone doesn’t have to do all the policy work,” she said.

As director of *Iniciativa Frontera*, David Arizmendi works with families who live in the unplanned rural communities known as “colonias” in the Rio Grande Valley, along the Texas/Mexico border.

The colonias are communities built by the working poor — with an average income of less than \$7,000 a year — who have been priced out of the cities. Houses in the colonias usually have





no electricity, sewers or garbage pick-up, and Arizmendi and his staff find their time consumed with the community’s daily struggles and the health problems that accompany its living conditions. Iniciativa organizes communities within the colonias, and nurtures the home-grown leadership that can identify and develop strategies to tackle their specific problems.

Arizmendi said ProTex will help organizations like his obtain information and analysis in a timely fashion, so that they can understand its impact on their communities immediately. “For example, with welfare reform, someone can digest and simplify it, then we can say, ‘This is how it will impact us,’ then we can develop a policy to minimize the impact, and take steps to address those changes.” Iniciativa offered citizenship classes, targeted to the elderly and disabled, when it became clear that they were the most at risk at losing benefits under welfare reform.

“The problem is when these things hit out of nowhere, and too late, because we didn’t have the information,” Arizmendi said. “We react without being able to minimize the damage. Because we deal with the day to day stuff, we don’t get the information we need.”

ProTex promises to make working together easier, but there are still obstacles to overcome. For Arizmendi, ProTex will be successful if the policy-driven organizations and grassroots groups work together as equal partners, with the policy analysts taking their cue from the people closest to the issues in the communities.

“I think we’re headed in the right direction,” Arizmendi said. “It’s two pieces of the puzzle that need to come together. People don’t need to be led,

they need the tools to effect change.” After a year of meetings and discussions among board members to define the mission of ProTex, he believes “we are now at a point where there is sufficient trust and respect among ourselves that has enabled us to honestly communicate with one another.”

James of Consumers Union said one of the biggest problems is getting people working on different issues to see their common goals. “For example, on the environmental justice issue, where civil rights advocates are joining with environmentalists the synergy is greater than the sum of their parts.” But James has no doubt that, with time and through the ProTex network, many coalitions will come together around shared issues, and spark that kind of synergy.

“Five or ten years down the line, we’ll be like a school of fish turning all at the same time, because we will know how to work together,” he said.

- ◆ *Left: A strategy session of the ProTex conference steering committee.*
- ◆ *Right: ProTex staff with keynote speaker Jim Hightower.*

### **ProTex: Network for a Progressive Texas Advisory Board\***

- ACORN*
- Center for Public Policy Priorities*
- Consumers Union Southwest Regional Office*
- El Paso Collaborative*
- Houston Immigration and Refugee Coalition*
- Iniciativa Frontera*
- League of Women Voters*
- Liberation Community*
- Texas AFL-CIO*
- Texas Appleseed*
- Texas Association of CDCs*
- Texans Care for Children*
- Texas Center for Policy Studies*
- Texas Faculty Association*
- United Farm Workers/South Texas Civil Rights Project*



*\* ProTex is a network comprised of a wide range of social, environmental, and economic justice groups from across Texas.*

# Washington

“The only way we’re going to bring change is if we have more collaboration.”

—Barbara Flye

**W**hen John Boonstra thinks about what it takes to sustain a movement, the first thing that comes to mind is relationships. “Relationships are paramount in sustaining the base,” he said. “Nurturing and sustaining the base means bringing people together to share their stories and learn about themselves and others.”

Boonstra is director of the Washington Association of Churches which includes more than 1,600 Roman Catholic and Protestant congregations in the state of Washington. The Association is one of three organizations collaborating to build a living wage movement. The others are Washington Citizen Action, a coalition of church, senior citizen, community and labor organizations, and the Washington State Labor Council, which represents local unions and labor councils, with 1,000 affiliates and 400,000 members across the state.

“Each of the organizations in the initiative were out there doing separate work,” said Barbara Flye, executive director of Washington Citizen Action, which has 50,000 members around the state and offices in Seattle and Tacoma. “They would get support from time to time, but they did not have a strong relationship with a common vision about where people want to go. This has allowed us to think about that joint

vision, and how to bring in other organizations from around the state.”

*Collaborations that Count* has enabled public policy research organizations in the state to meet formally, Boonstra said, and explore how their work fits together, and meet with people doing the organizing. “What was not being done, what the collaborative does, is bring us together proactively about what a living wage movement would look like,” he said.

Flye said joint staff meetings as well as retreats for the steering committee to discuss “what have we done so far, and where are we going” have become more common.

“The only way we’re going to bring change is if we have more collaboration, and an appreciation that we all want to go to the same place,” she said.

Instead of developing a separate infrastructure, their plan is to nurture the regional groups that already exist to build a statewide livable wage movement. In addition to raising the minimum wage, the movement will address eight “principles of unity”: child and elder care, housing and welfare reform, the right to organize, freedom from discrimination, job training and education. “It’s about economic security, and all those things that make it up,” Flye said.





◆ *Top: Speaking out against migrant farm worker housing conditions in Washington State.*

◆ *Bottom: Members of Washington's Living Wage Coalition gather for a rally.*

Program committees have been organized around the state to identify the strategies that will work best in different areas. In May 1999, 35 organizations from around the state came together, with follow-up meetings in Yakima and Spokane. Program committees allowed participants to get to know each other, explore public policy implications and learn how to work within the statewide living wage movement. Work groups based on the eight principles were developed, with achievable goals and a strategy for each. “What Spokane, Yakima and Seattle do may be different things,” Boonstra said. “A living wage ordinance may work in one area and not another.”

Michael Ramos, a program associate for economic justice with the Washington Association of Churches said part of the challenge in building the movement is overcoming perceptions that divide the western and eastern parts of the state.

“Westerners are resented by the eastern part of the state, which is more rural and poorer,” Ramos said. The Cascade Mountains form a physical boundary, separating parts of the state that have different climates and attitudes. “While in the west, the campaign to raise child care worker wages is being met with sympathy by the public, in the east child care is seen as a source of steady income in comparison with working at McDonald’s,” he said. But there are common threads, he added such as the availability of affordable housing. In the rural areas, farm worker housing is often in poor condition, and in Seattle, “housing costs are becoming legendary,” he said. “We’re forging ties, bit by bit,” Ramos said. “Progress may be methodical, but we’re building strong connections.”



## Washington Collaboration

*Washington Association of Churches*

*Washington Citizen Action Education and Research Fund*

*Washington State Labor Council*



# Ancillary Grantees



Eight grants were awarded to national or regional policy or technical assistance organizations to provide support to the state-based collaborations.

**C**ollaborations that Count also funded regional and national intermediary organizations to help build the capacity of the organizations within the 11 state partnerships to carry out their work effectively.

#### ◆ Alliance for Justice

The Alliance for Justice provides technical assistance and training to grantees and partners on IRS rules pertaining to lobbying, and laws and regulations governing voter registration and education and other campaigns.

#### ◆ Center for Policy Alternatives

The Center for Policy Alternatives helps link community-based organizations with public leaders for more effective policy innovation.

#### ◆ Creative Communications

Creative Communications produces and disseminates news stories in Idaho, Washington and Oregon that reflect the analysis and perspective of collaborative partners.

#### ◆ Economic Policy Institute

The Economic Policy Institute, through its Economic Analysis and Research Network, provides assistance to organizations working on living standards issues.

#### ◆ Northwest Federation of Community Organizations

Northwest Federation of Community Organizations provides training, capacity building and research activities to collaborative partners in the Northwest.

#### ◆ Progressive Technology Project

The Progressive Technology Project provides technology and financial services, including upgrades and training to organizations in the South.

#### ◆ Southern Partners Fund

The Southern Partners Fund convenes collaborative partners in the Southern region, and facilitates technical assistance.

#### ◆ Western States Center

The Western States Center provides training and technical assistance to collaborative partners and other community organizations to encourage civic and political participation in the Northwest.



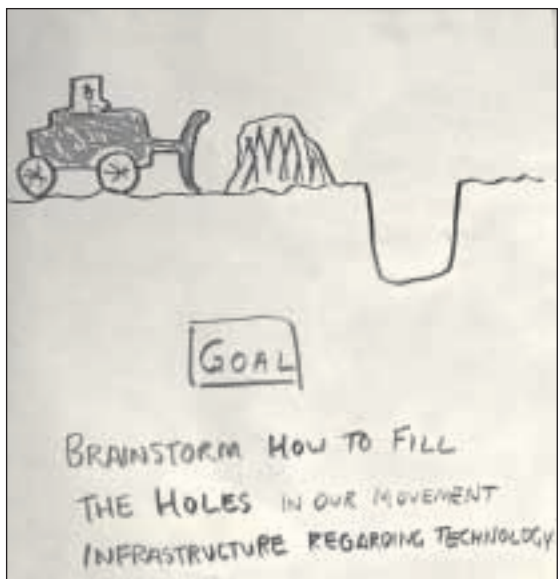


◆ Top left: Creative Communications works with grassroots groups on media strategies.

◆ Top right: Western States Center staff.

◆ Bottom left: The Economic Policy Institute produces publications on the economic disparities of the American economy.

◆ Bottom right: The Southern collaborations participated in Progressive Technology Project's second gathering of allied groups in spring, 2000.



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The cover and chapter titles are set in Futura Bold Condensed. An early Modern Sans Serif typeface influenced by the Bauhaus was drawn in Germany the early to middle 1900's.

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July 2000



◆ *Mobile homes  
in Alabama.*



**A fundamental challenge facing every society is to create political, economic and social systems that promote peace, human welfare and the sustainability of the environment on which life depends. We believe that the best way to meet this challenge is to encourage initiatives by those living and working closest to where the problems are located; to promote collaboration among the nonprofit, government and business sectors; and to ensure participation by men and women from diverse communities and at all levels of society. In our experience, such activities help build common understanding, enhance excellence, enable people to improve their lives and reinforce their commitment to society.**

*—Excerpt from The Ford Foundation mission statement*