

Chairman and Board 2012 pending grants or projects


Grantee/Project	2012 Grants	Notes
Planned Parenthood Federation of America (Southern Project)	\$7,055,000	OSF total is \$13.4m over 4 years (this accelerated payment would fully satisfy our commitment)
Naturalization	\$1,750,000	
Drug Policy Alliance	\$600,000	DPA receives \$4m per year from CNDP; GS has committed an additional \$1m per year for 10 years, starting in 2012 (\$400k from c4 sources)
Kaiser awards	\$100,000	GS commitment to replicate Canada awards in the U.S.
California criminal justice reform	\$500,000	
Young Men's Initiative (Bloomberg)	\$2,200,000	
Total 2012 approved:	\$12,205,000	

Additional potential 2012 grants/projects	2012 Grants	Notes
Additional nonpartisan voting-related work	\$9,000,000	Memo from Board Advisors for discussion in October
Total 2012 pending grants or projects:	\$21,205,000	

MEMORANDUM

To: Sherrilyn Ifill, George Soros, and the U.S. Programs Board
From: Deepak Bhargava and Andy Stern
Re: New Thinking on 2012 Election and Beyond

“Registering them (the poor) to vote is like handing out burglary tools to criminals. It is profoundly antisocial and un-American to empower the nonproductive segments of the population to destroy the country.”

 Matthew Vadum, from “Registering the Poor to Vote is Un-American,” **American Thinker**, September 1, 2011

This quote, from a conservative activist, is not an isolated perspective. We meet at a time when the combination of major global economic transformation, growing intolerance, and a corrupted political process put our open society values – and the success of many of our initiatives – at stake. It seems highly unlikely, if not impossible, for OSF to achieve its goals, much less maintain the successes it has achieved, without us playing a major role in promoting and funding significant strategic unity, participation, and mobilization, including voter participation, from the constituencies that are most affected by inequality and injustice.

We have carefully considered the feedback and concerns from board members about voter engagement work at our prior two board meetings. We believe that a new approach, specified here, addresses those concerns and aligns well with OSF values and priorities. We are therefore proposing that the OSF Board allocate \$9 million in additional funds to support a 2012 plan with four components:

- 1) Voter engagement that is anchored in OSF’s priority constituencies. This requires a focus on African Americans, Latinos, and youth.
- 2) Focusing resources in cities and states where OSF issue priorities (immigration, criminal justice, drug policy, fiscal policy) will be on the ballot or featured prominently in public discourse and where the outcome will have lasting implications for the priorities we hold dear.
- 3) Field testing newly developed economic narratives, and experimenting with more collaborative models for campaign communications and amplification for our efforts where appropriate.
- 4) Recognizing that voter registration work should not be a “forever” endeavor, and this is a 2012 decision only, we therefore include in this proposal an allocation of funds to explore a paradigm shifting campaign that would obviate the need for third party voter registration efforts. Until such reforms are achieved, however, we have a responsibility to continue to play a significant, but not dominant, role in 2012 voter registration.

We cannot retreat at such a critical time for open society issues. The **Ford Foundation** is committing an additional **\$10 million to voter registration** (on top of its \$10 million in previously budgeted funding for 2012). Under our proposal, OSF would comprise 19% of the total expected funding for voter registration and engagement work in 2012, a significant but not disproportionate role.

Executive Summary of Request

Below are the four (4) key components of this one-time recommendation for \$9 million in new 2012 election cycle funding. In making this recommendation, we recognize that this is a key moment in history where open society institutions, constituencies, and priorities are under attack, and our adversaries are doubling down. We also recognize that the cycle of OSF and philanthropic voter registration funding needs to be reduced over time. We believe, however, that it is irresponsible for us to now pull out of a field where our investments in the participation of the most marginalized are vital (we are one of few funders with that specific focus) without a “big idea” that ensures that voter participation will return to 2008 levels in the 2012 cycle, and then a new framework will arise in the future. In addition, 2012 is a perfect laboratory to test some economic approaches and to address communication gaps that have been discussed by the OSF Board. This recommendation addresses these short-term realities as well as the need to shift our approach in the future.

I. Win Pre-Determined **Substantive Changes in Open Society Priorities that will be Resolved in **2012 City and State Elections** (\$3.5 million recommendation).**

Focus narrowly on key places such as California, Maryland, Ohio, and Wisconsin where open society campaigns are already underway and where our investment can bolster the likelihood of an electorate that is more receptive to current and future open society priorities. Legally, we cannot direct voter registration in fewer than five states. With recent political attacks on: 1) voter access, including onerous new voter identification laws in several states; 2) immigrants, such as the attempt to repeal Maryland’s new state DREAM Act for immigrant students; and 3) public employees, such as the high profile attacks in Ohio and Wisconsin, there are a number of cities and states where OSF investment could make a great impact. There are also some potential proactive efforts in the works to advance drug policy reform that may emerge, perhaps in California or Colorado, and to expand public investment and increase tax revenue, such as in Colorado.

This is *not*, both legally and philosophically, about candidates or parties. This is about shifting American demographics, which communities are heard – or not – in our democracy and what it takes to ensure that open society issues advance. This is also about the importance of creating a long-term independent political force that can hold elected leaders of all parties accountable to open society values and priorities both before and after Election Day. This would also complement our ongoing city/state research process by identifying where major open society priorities are most resonant – or challenged – and where our future advocacy campaign investments would be most effective.

II. Voter Registration and Engagement: For 2012, **Focus Narrowly on OSF Priority Constituencies (\$2.75 million recommendation). (Our specific goal should be to have 2012**

voter participation rates from the Rising American Electorate – principally people of color and youth constituencies – meet 2008 levels or, preferably, comprise the appropriate share of the adult citizen population. With the state of the economy and current lack of enthusiasm about the 2012 election this is an ambitious goal.)

Through a narrow focus on historically less active voters, OSF funding can, with high levels of voter participation, contribute to a larger constituency for open society advocacy priorities. We recommend that all new voter engagement funding be narrowly focused on raising the participation of Black, Latino, and youth constituencies that are key to the advancement of the Campaign for Black Male Achievement, immigrants’ rights, and other open society interests. New national efforts are currently underway to establish collaboratives of funders and groups working to maximize Black, Latino, and youth voter turnout in 2012. OSF investment in such efforts would enable us to provide early strategic leadership and support the economies of scale that enhanced collaboration brings, thus bringing a greater return on our investments. Over time, these economies of scale will reduce the need for future funding.

III. For 2013 and Beyond, Advance Very Specific Paradigm Shifting Voter Registration Policies that Maximize Voter Participation and End the Need for OSF and Other Funders to Fund Voter Registration (\$750,000 recommendation).

For 2013, we recommend a deeper focus on identifying and advancing policies to get OSF out of the voter engagement business. In many countries, voter registration is automatic for all who are eligible. In the U.S., as we know, despite the passage of the National Voter Registration Act¹ public agencies and officials are often resistant to registering voters since it either threatens their own standing or can be too much work. Some, conservatives principally, want to limit voter registration since demography is not seen to be their destiny. We should seek to have automatic voter registration for all who are eligible. Having independent groups, such as those that OSF funds, in a perpetual hand to mouth cycle of voter registration every election year does not build a thriving democracy, nor does legal advocacy on voting rights solve this challenge. We recommend new idea generation and increased advocacy for voter registration modernization policies that lead to universal voter registration, the full participation of public agencies in voter registration as laid out in the National Voter Registration Act, and proactive efforts to expand democracy rather than solely focusing on reactive, rear guard defensive efforts such as the Tea Party’s attacks on voter access. This could become a campaign that OSF, via the Board, staff, and grantees, could play a leading role in elevating beyond the current state of advocacy.

IV. “It’s The Economy, Stupid”: Using the 2012 Election to Test Economic Models and Building Effective New Communication Vehicles to Ampify Targeted OSF Priorities (\$2 million recommendation).

Focus on new innovations through field testing the same effective narratives on the economy being developed by Drew Westen and Stan Greenberg in collaboration with Rob Johnson. These would be connected to Media Matters’ economic messaging project and then brought to the city level for field testing, utilizing some of the above constituency and place-based engagement

¹ The National Voter Registration Act is also known as the “Motor Voter” law, in reference to its requirement that public agencies, such as motor vehicle registries, provide voter registration services.

voter efforts. James Carville's oft-cited quote above, regarding the significance of the economy in 1992, will hold true in 2012 and no other funder appears to be looking at ways to integrate economic thinking and economic narrative testing into approaches to voter engagement now in order to build a more coherent narrative going forward. An OSF innovation here would target funding to 2-4 local efforts that will conduct data driven field experiments to determine effective narratives on jobs and the economy that resonate with average voters, and can hopefully be used to end the "missing economic narrative" syndrome. Such efforts will take current narrative discussions beyond *words* and inside the Beltway, Washington, DC consultants and instead focus on *actions*, testing narratives, in real time, with voters in their homes or congregations in key places across the nation. Analysis will then follow to discern what works and this could have broad and lasting relevance to the advocacy universe.

There has been much discussion of the overabundance of ideas and the underwhelming focus on effective vehicles and channels to promote them. The 2012 election will bring a full range of opportunities for testing new more multi-constituent communication vehicles, on several key open society priorities, that OSF could analyze for broader use in the future.

WHY OSF SUPPORT FOR VOTER ENGAGEMENT IS CRITICAL

Background

Following the May U.S. Programs Board Meeting and the approval of additional funding for voter protection and voter enhancement "shared tools," we now propose a complementary request. It's clear that the perpetual cycle of election driven voter investments is never ending and not, in itself, a winning strategy and we understand the Board's various perspectives on this challenge. We look forward to the Board reaching some agreement and providing guidance on how we gradually pull out from that cycle in favor of strategies that could be much more effective in encouraging sustained and broad-scale voter participation.

In many regards, the 2008 election, sadly, was an anomaly, with an historic candidate who produced unprecedented energy and participation from Black, Latino, and young voters. In 2010, there was a dramatic disengagement from the same electorate, other than where there was a specifically targeted campaign (such as with Latino voters in the Southwest states). Clearly, since the 2008 election the energy among the public and these constituencies has receded, particularly among youth and Latino voters. Without OSF's targeted funding of voter engagement, U.S. democracy will continue to be dominated by an older, wealthier, and whiter – and less open society friendly – electorate at a time when shifting demography should mean the contrary. This may please the Tea Party but should trouble us, for a less open society friendly electorate threatens every issue on which we work. A less diverse electorate also means that we'll miss the opportunity in the present to begin to cultivate a long-term culture of democratic participation among Black, Latino, and youth constituencies that can shift how the U.S. addresses open society long into the future.

OSF'S LEADERSHIP IN THE VOTER FUNDING FIELD

OSF is an important leader in the field of non-partisan voter participation strategy development and funding, serving as one of four lead c3 funders – with **Carnegie, Ford, and Wellspring** – in

strategic thought leadership and funding. Our traditional funding for non-partisan voter engagement, via the Democracy and Power Fund, is budgeted for \$7.3m in the 2012 cycle, of which \$3.9m has been granted in 2011 (leaving roughly \$3.4 million largely for 2012 renewal grants to high performing groups). OSF's existing funding supports national organizations that conduct work at the city and state levels to integrate voter participation into a broader continuum of civic engagement that includes open society advocacy and the development of new leaders from Black, Latino, and youth constituencies. Additionally, the Transparency and Integrity Fund invests in election administration and voter protection related efforts and is part of a group of funders, such as Carnegie, Ford, Wallace Global, and the Democracy Alliance, in that important field. OSF is a key leader in the voter engagement field, and one of several large voter funders, currently committing 11% of the \$65m in c3 funding for this field for the 2012 cycle. A commitment of \$9m in additional funding would go toward a match with other voter funders that includes \$10m in new funding for voter registration that is in the final stages of being approved by the Ford Foundation.

Currently Projected Voter Engagement Funder Budgets for 2012

Foundation	Allocated	New Funding	Total Funding
Ford Foundation	\$10 million	\$10 million	\$20 million
OSF	\$7.3m	\$9m request	\$16.3m (if approved)
Wellspring Advisors	\$10m	possible; unclear	\$10m
Carnegie	\$5.6m		\$5.6m
Bauman	\$5m		\$5m
Stoneman Foundation	\$5m		\$5m
Committee on States	\$4m		\$4m
Democracy Alliance	\$3.5m		\$3.5m
Smaller voter funders (5)	\$15m		\$15m
TOTAL	\$65.4m	\$10m (\$19m w/OSF)	\$84.4m

Should OSF approve this \$9m request and join with Ford's new funding, we would comprise 19% of the overall projected \$84.4m in funding for the voter field for 2012, a healthy and important level for our focus on the most marginalized voters, but not a dominant role that would draw unwanted exposure or create the expectation for us to prop up this field in future years.

Background from OSF Staff

In the 2008 cycle, OSF provided roughly \$10m in c3 funding for Women's Voices, Women Vote, the Youth Engagement Fund, Project Vote, Democracia-USA, the Bus Federation, and other constituency based efforts that were among the highest performing voter registration groups (as evaluated by an influential report from the New Organizing Institute). In the 2010 cycle, OSF invested \$5m funding for the voter engagement of "drop-off voters," those who voted

for the first time in 2008 but were less likely to vote in an off-year election. Overall, the levels of funding from our peer funders also went down significantly in 2010 and some prior voter engagement funders were scared away from funding the work at all due to the ferocity of attacks on voter registration of low-income Black and Latino communities in 2008. OSF funding was insufficient to make up that gap. Additionally, voter registration as a strategy was de-emphasized in 2010 by both grantees and funders in the wake of the 2008 attacks on ACORN and the perception that focusing on drop-off voters was a more cost-efficient target. Regardless of the funding landscape in 2010, it was clear that any efforts that we supported were heading into some very strong political headwinds that were beyond our control. A notable success in 2010 was our funding of effective and large scale Latino voter participation efforts, we are one of the nation's largest funders of Latino civic engagement, and the record off-year voter turnout of Latino voters in California, Colorado, and Nevada.

As mentioned above, the Ford Foundation is in the final stages of green lighting an additional \$10m in new funding for voter work and would like to be joined by other funders. Were OSF to match \$9m to the most marginalized communities working in high priority states with open society advocacy opportunities, it would enable us to provide significant and early funding to some of the largest and most effective voter registration efforts in the nation, including **Rock The Vote, Women's Voices, Women Vote**², and the groups at the Black, Latino, and youth collaborative tables, including the **NAACP** and **Mi Familia Vota**, an important effort in the Latino community. With such a match, OSF total voter engagement funding would comprise 19% of the overall field, significant and essential but not dominant.

REGISTRATION MUST BE A KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITY

The 2008 election brought historically high voter participation from key constituencies – namely African Americans, Latinos, and young people – but we now are confronted by an “enthusiasm gap,” where many first-time voters in 2008 are uninspired to vote again. This gap was underscored by the low turnout in 2010 of the “Rising American Electorate,” the people of color, youth, and unmarried women that now comprise the majority of the American eligible voting population – 52.8% of the U.S.'s adult citizen population – but not yet the majority of voters (only 47.1% of the number of registered voters). On a positive note, there are many newly eligible voters – naturalized citizens and people turning 18 – who are potential additions to the voter rolls. Every day for example, 13,000 young people turn 18 and, underscoring the Latino community's potential power, each month 50,000 young Latinos who are eligible to vote turn 18. We are also confronted by the gap created by the demise of ACORN. Without significant, early

² While often cited as the largest voter registration organization in the nation, Rock the Vote employs an online model to drive young people to download voter registration forms and to, hopefully and voluntarily, send them to their local election officials. Our funding to Rock the Vote, for example, would require it to use our funds to more narrowly target its outreach with Black and Latino youth and to establish local partnerships with city-based organizations that ensure the voter registration forms get completed and submitted appropriately. Similarly, Women's Voices, Women Vote is often cited among the largest voter registration operations in the nation and it employs a mail driven approach to registration. We would also work with them to target their work more narrowly with our funding in order to facilitate evaluation of OSF's impact.

investments in rigorous and large-scale collaborative efforts in low-income Black and Latino communities for 2012, we will see sizable drop-off in voter turnout in this high stakes election.

In a high turnout presidential election, particularly one with an expected \$1 billion in campaign spending from the major party nominees, the strategic “sweet spot” for c3 funders and organizations should focus more heavily on voter registration than getting out the vote. Voter registration is the primary means to get underrepresented communities into the political process and then, later in the election season, electoral campaigns typically have well-funded get out the vote efforts.

In 2008, independent, non-partisan c3 organizations that were not affiliated with any party or candidate – including many OSF grantees – successfully registered more than 2.1 million new voters, including nearly 13% of all new Black voters, more than 9% of new Latino voters, more than 8% of new youth voters, and nearly 11% of all new voters with an annual income under \$25,000. Such independent c3 organizations are often the most trusted messengers for information for infrequent or new voters since they are often more community rooted and can be seen as less biased than a political party or candidate campaign. Independent c3 groups are often the primary means of informing first-time or historically disenfranchised voters about the process of voting. This is especially important for 2012 since many states have taken steps to make it harder for people to register to vote and are now implementing onerous new voter identification rules that could confuse or intimidate new or infrequent voters.

Advancing open society in any policymaking climate is challenging. As we’ve witnessed in recent years, it gets even more difficult in a hostile advocacy climate. Simply put, without high levels of voter participation from Black, Latino, and youth voters in 2012, it is likely that every single OSF priority, domestically and globally, will face a tougher battle. A focus solely on election administration, voting rights, and voter protection, while important, is incomplete. Ultimately, if we do not support rigorous, results oriented, and large scale efforts to inspire high levels of voter engagement from Black, Latino, and youth communities, the need to provide voter protection – unfortunately – declines.

Last, but not least, we can report that the Board’s June, 2011 approval of the “shared tools” funding – via an OSF partnership with Wellspring Advisors to support c3 group access to the highest quality voter lists, Catalist consumer data, Atlas Project state-based data, and targeted technical assistance – is having a tremendous, positive impact. Leading voter engagement groups report that OSF’s shared tools funding commitment has already enhanced their ability to negotiate for lower-cost services, leaving more of their funding able to be deployed for voter registration and getting out the vote in the all-important 2012 election.