



CITIZEN ACTION OF WISCONSIN EDUCATION FUND

Organizing people to make Wisconsin
a better place to live and work

Citizen Action of Wisconsin Education Fund, founded in 1983, is a non-partisan, statewide organization bringing together tens of thousands of individuals across the state and 146 diverse coalition partners with a shared vision of social, racial, economic, environmental and health justice for all.

SUMMARY

Citizen Action Fund's primary goal is to build the power of the social justice movement in our state. We unite constituencies and individuals across issue and constituency-lines in order to aggregate power and create a lasting infrastructure through which to advance an agenda based on the principles of community, democracy, equality, justice, environmental sustainability, freedom and opportunity. Our model is sustainable and focuses on:

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- Building a new progressive base in key regions of the state which previously lacked cross-constituency social change organizing (Western and Northeast Wisconsin)
- Building coalitions at the local and state levels and organizing people across issues and constituency lines
- Developing powerful new leaders
- Increasing civic participation among under-represented constituencies and in our organizing regions (a non-partisan program to get people active in the political process)
- Changing the terms of the political debate in a systematic way

Review of 2007 Accomplishments

Citizen Action Fund has continued to make concrete progress towards our goal of building lasting infrastructure for social and environmental justice. Following is a summary of our performance through the year:

- Health care advocacy is the tier one issue for Citizen Action Fund, meaning that our board has voted that we take a leadership role in a long term campaign. In 2006, we convened the ***Wisconsin Health Care Reform Campaign***, which brought together 35 diverse organizations representing over 2 million people. Key partners include the major reform proponents Coalition on Wisconsin Health, the Wisconsin AFL-CIO, and the Wisconsin Health Project as well as major constituency groups such as Wisconsin Council of Churches, Disability Rights Wisconsin, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, AARP, Planned Parenthood, and the NAACP.
- In Western Wisconsin, Citizen Action Fund hosted 10 forums to provide information about legislative options, met with newly engaged activists, and culled the opinions and issue priorities of local leaders in many communities. Western Wisconsin organizers hosted 9 Sicko showings and conducted 312 individual meetings with over 300 citizens in a 14-county area, with the majority of citizens supporting health care reform with at least one action – attending a forum, contacting a legislator, writing a letter to the editor

of their local paper, or volunteering to help with a local event. Organizers also facilitated coalition meetings in which activists and leaders were able to network and exchange ideas for progressive action. Through 2007-2008, Citizen Action Fund will continue to offer message training and support to activists and leaders, and help them implement events that create opportunities for individual action, widen local networks and reach across organizational boundaries.

- Using research from the Herndon Alliance and the results of a poll we orchestrated of Wisconsin residents, conducted by Lake Research, Citizen Action developed progressive message framing for Wisconsin and are providing training around the frame to our coalition partners, local organizations, local leaders and activists. For more on framing, please see our website: www.citizenactionwi.org.
- In order to develop the progressive electoral capacity of our allies, we have expanded the voter file project to create more training and provide access to organizations on the functions, uses and importance of the file, targeting data and research. We have recruited twenty c3 and eleven c4 organizations to date and have conducted four trainings so far. Additionally, we are increasing the capacity of the voter file by adding the latest demographic information and undertaking an unparalleled voter issue modeling project to increase their use of the civic engagement file
- To meet our goal of multiplying and strengthening leaders, activists and volunteers, Citizen Action has developed the *Leadership Pathway*, a program that systemizes activist participation with a focus on leadership development. In Milwaukee, to date we have developed 31 leaders, a majority of them from low income and minority communities. In Northeastern Wisconsin, we have developed 12 leaders and in Western Wisconsin 14 leaders. By the end of 2007, we would have engaged 143 activists in Milwaukee, 212 in Northwest Wisconsin and 154 in Western Wisconsin (including a significant number of Hmong women and the LGBT community) and 154 in NE Wisconsin.
- We are in the process of implementing a new membership database. Projected to be fully functioning at the beginning of 2008, this new tool will house all of our membership data and will be accessible by each organizer at their desk or in the field. It will allow us to track which members have taken actions, their progress on the *Leadership Pathway* referenced above and allow ease of electronic communication. It will also streamline our data entry process eliminating duplicate entries.
- Civic Engagement: We have worked since 2000 to increase civic participation among under-represented constituencies. In 2006, we ran our most successful program to date, increasing turnout by 32% over 2002 in 11 targeted wards in Milwaukee, and increasing turnout by 31% in Eau Claire. In Green Bay, we targeted 12,000 single women voters with door-to-door canvass, 2 pieces of direct mail, and automated calls reminding them to vote.
- In Western Wisconsin, the regional organizer assisted a grassroots group called the *Save Our Hills Coalition* of over 300 activists in Dunn county fighting to protect the environment. In Northeast Wisconsin, organizers worked with our national affiliate, USAction, in sending a powerful message against the war in Iraq. In Milwaukee, we continue our work with parents of children who participate in Community Learning Centers, helping them become advocates for their children's education.