



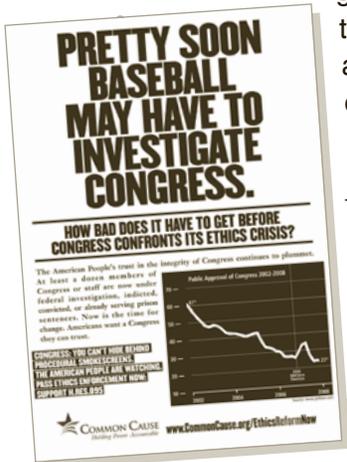
(News from the front lines)

Victory For Ethics In The House!

“At 10:30 PM the House after a bruising debate and a motion to adjourn in the middle, and a contentious vote on the previous question, voted 229 to 182 to adopt the resolution creating an independent Office of Congressional Ethics. I am flabbergasted. WE DID IT!!!! This was an amazing Common Cause team effort from grassroots to grass tops. This is what a world class organization looks like!!!”

—Email from Sarah Dufendach, Common Cause’s chief lobbyist, March 11, 2008

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President’s Corner

In the year since I was elected president of Common Cause, I have come to know the organization, its energetic and dedicated staff, interns and volunteers. And I have met many of you, the members and activists who make Common Cause the great, enduring advocacy organization it has been for 38 years.

Earlier this year, I was very pleased that a former colleague of mine in the US House of Representatives, Jim Leach, was chosen to lead Common Cause’s National Governing Board. Read more about Jim on page 8.

As you will see in this newsletter, Common Cause is working hard on many fronts to bring change. But we cannot do it without our committed activists, members and generous donors. As I travel around the country speaking to groups of citizens, I often ask the audience to speak with me, loudly: **We are... The Leaders... We Have Been Waiting For.**

In that spirit, I was pleased to hear from an activist, Jan Gollehon, who emailed her congratulations for our role in getting the US House of Representatives to pass a tough, new independent ethics commission. She said: “Thank you and your organization for all the good work you do. Keep it up and so will we.”

We are now in the midst of an important presidential race and about to enter a critical transition period for this country. We need fundamental change. We’re not trying to weaken the hold that special interests have on American politics. We’re out to break their grip once and for all.

We don’t need a presidential election that is little more than an arms race for cash. We need genuine leadership from candidates ready, willing and able to address the fundamental problems that America faces in 2008.

Common Cause is ready for the challenge. With all of you as leaders, we will succeed.

Peace, Bob Edgar

You can contact me at redgar@commoncause.org
For more on our work, visit www.commoncause.org

Bipartisan Reception—In February, Common Cause celebrated its new bipartisan leadership team, President Bob Edgar and Board Chairman Jim Leach, with a reception attended by hundreds of friends at the Library of Congress. See more photos at www.commoncause.org/reception



Power of Advocacy

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

VICTORY FOR ETHICS IN THE HOUSE!

There are a few moments in the life of advocacy groups like Common Cause that make all the hard, often frustrating work of reform worthwhile. One of those moments came in a late night vote by the US House of Representatives on March 11, when the House ended its decades-long failure to police its own ethics. The House established an independent office to oversee and help enforce its ethics rules.

The Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE), an independent and impartial panel of six outside experts, will have the power to investigate allegations of wrongdoing and monitor compliance of House rules and to issue reports and recommendations to the House Ethics Committee.

This stunning turnaround by the House—the idea has been rejected frequently in the past—could not have happened without the unrelenting pressure from around the country by Common Cause’s activists, the timely help of our donors, and years of work by our staff.

And it could not have happened without the skill and experience of our chief lobbyist, Sarah Dufendach. Lobbying has a bad reputation among many Americans, but Washington is also the home to many lobbyists, like Sarah, who are working in the public interest. She worked closely with key House staff and Members to craft a proposal that would be effective—and, importantly, would pass the House.

We engaged all of Common Cause in a full-fledged campaign, showing what we can do when we all pull together. Besides inside lobbying, we worked the press by placing op-eds in newspapers and on popular blogs like Huffington Post, we generated editorials in newspapers across the country, we held a telephone press conference with reporters from major media outlets, and made appearances on TV and radio.

Staff and volunteers in our state organizations pitched in with calls to Congress and local media. Interns and volunteers in the national office phone-banked, worked on lists of targeted congressmen, and provided invaluable backup for our staff.

We estimate that our online activists made about 4,000 calls to House Members, sent more than 700 emails to targeted Representatives and helped create the outside pressure that was absolutely critical to passing this resolution.

“We don’t know if hell has frozen over, but the U.S. House of Representatives has done something almost as unlikely—it took a strong stand against political corruption this week by creating an independent ethics office.” —St. Petersburg Times

We reached out to a longtime supporter of reform and former National Governing Board member, Alan Weirsba, to fund a full page ad in *Roll Call*, a newspaper read avidly by everyone on Capitol Hill. The ad ran just before the vote in the House and helped create even more of a buzz. You can view the ad on the front page of this newsletter.

We celebrated the victory on March 12, but we know that passing a bill is not the end of the fight. We are already working to make sure the House leadership appoints the right people to the commission so that it will succeed in its mission.

To read more on the ethics fight, go to www.commonblog.org



Washington Connection volunteer Burt Emmer calling our members, asking them to call Congress to urge passage of the ethics bill.

CAUSENET

Are you on CauseNet, our online activist list? Go to our homepage and sign up now, receive our email alerts, and be part of the action.

There are 170,000 activists who receive CauseNets and they are key to victories like passage of the independent ethics panel (see p. 2). We told our online activists what was really happening on Capitol Hill as a few reform champions in Congress and Common Cause pushed for real ethics enforcement. And CauseNet-ers responded: 4,000 phone calls, 700 emails.

Here's some of what we heard back from our activists:

- ♦ A civics teacher in **Wolfeboro, NH**, saw our email alert and went back to tell his class about it. The teacher said, "I am teaching my students about ethics and the lack thereof in congress today and we offer our full support (23 of us have called Rep. Shea-Porter so far & many more afternoon classes to come)... Thank you for doing an 'outstanding' job!"
- ♦ An activist in **Remsen, NY** said, "I spoke with a member of the Congressman's staff...an independent ethics committee is, I believe, not only a rational step, but one we must take if we wish to restore Americans confidence in their representatives in the Congress."
- ♦ An activist in **Downers Grove, IL**, said he "Spoke with a person—said I am calling to urge support of House Res. 895 on ethics reform, had contacted Rep. Biggert many times over the years... Thanks for keeping us informed about issues and votes. We couldn't contact them at opportune times without you."
- ♦ From **Provo, UT**, we heard this: "What a significant victory for ethics reform if this bill becomes law. I have been working hard for something like this in Utah with no success so far."
- ♦ And from **Lewisburg, PA**: "Emailed the following: EVERYONE KNOWS you do NOT put the foxes in charge of the hen house!... Common Cause activists have fought for and passed a major ethics reform bill in 2007. But that law can only be effective if it is enforced."

"No matter how many checks and balances we build into government, the abuse of power remains an ever-present possibility. So there must be bases of power and forceful voices outside of government."

—John Gardner



OUR AGENDA

Money in Politics

Campaign finance reform has been a hallmark issue for Common Cause. Our current focus is on fundamentally changing the way America pays for elections. We are working on the ultimate reform goal of 'Clean Elections', a voluntary system of publicly funded political campaigns at the federal and state levels.

Government Accountability/Ethics

Common Cause has for decades been a leading ethics watchdog at the federal and state levels. We were instrumental in passage of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. The bill strengthens disclosure of lobbying activity, restricts gifts for members of Congress, and requires mandatory disclosure of earmarks. Common Cause also led a successful effort to establish independent oversight of House ethics rules. (see story on p. 2)

Voting and Elections

Since the electoral meltdown in the 2000 presidential election, each Election Day has raised new alarms that the foundation of our democracy—voting—remains beset with problems. We are working to **increase access** to voting by removing existing barriers; to **ensure accuracy** by enhancing voting machine accuracy and security; and guaranteeing **accountability** by prohibiting partisan activity by elections officials.

Media and Democracy

Common Cause is working to ensure that the media meet their obligations to serve the public by promoting diversity, accessibility, and accountability among media corporations and the government agencies that regulate the media.

For much more on our issues, visit www.commoncause.org

JIM HIGHTOWER

Jim Hightower: **“Battling the Powers That Be on behalf of the Powers That Ought To Be—consumers, working families, environmentalists, small businesses, and just-plain-folks.”**

In March, Jim Hightower, the well-known and hilarious populist, was hosted by Common Cause state organizations in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, and New York as part of a tour for his new book, “Swim Against the Current: Even a Dead Fish Can Go With the Flow.” He also met with our staff in DC, discussing our current advocacy campaigns around the country.



Ryan O'Donnell, our new director of Common Cause Maryland, speaking in front of the Maryland statehouse for public financing legislation. The poster shows an ad linking deregulation of utilities with an increase in rates—a result of special interest money influencing legislators.

REBUILDING STATE ORGANIZATIONS

Two former Common Cause interns have taken the initiative to revive Common Cause in Hawaii and Minnesota. In Hawaii, Nikki Love is working with some former CC/HI volunteers and building alliances with other reform groups. Earlier this year, Nikki and others worked to put the brakes on a bill that would have undermined current campaign finance laws.

In Minnesota, energetic Mike Dean, who worked both as an intern and on the staff in the national office, is well on his way to restarting a new CC/MN.

Nikki Love & Hawaii state Senator Les Ihara, Jr.



BEYOND OUR BORDERS

In March, Common Cause co-sponsored “The Folly of Attacking Iran,” at Columbia University in New York City. The event was designed to raise awareness of the current situation between the United States and Iran and provide a better understanding of the historical relationship between the two nations.

Common Cause has for years hosted groups of visiting foreign journalists, legislators and civic activists, discussing our work and learning from their experiences. We are now developing ways to expand our role outside the United States.

Our work at Common Cause is enriched by the work of interns from colleges around the country—and the world. This winter and spring we have had five

interns from other countries (l to r): Jerome Top from France, Lidia Knaub from Germany, Lucile Maertens, also France, Raneen Hasuna from Palestine. Also Natalia Martinez from Colombia (not pictured).



Power of Our Supporters

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

NOTE FROM JOHN BRISCOE, VICE PRESIDENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

I am happy to report that Common Cause's supporters and donors have been more than generous this year. Most non-profits have seen a dip in donations because of the economic downfall, but we have not, thanks to the loyalty of tens of thousands of donors. Approximately 75 percent of Common Cause's \$11 million budget comes from our members, with the remainder coming from foundations.

Be assured we are putting your donations to good use—take a look at the activities reported throughout this newsletter. We've also made sure that every penny is accounted for by our hardworking accounting staff.

And we always strive to make sure that Common Cause has the resources to expand the great work of our program staff. Our organizational goal is to make sure that lack of resources will never stand in the way of completing our mission.

The development staff has been reorganized and rejuvenated. Recognizing that development is everybody's responsibility, we are delighted that everyone on the staff and a host of volunteers and board members have stepped up to the plate to provide names, write grants, make phone calls and talk to their friends about Common Cause. State staff and board members have grown their development activities impressively.

We see development as a means of extending the reach and expanding the power of our friends to hold government accountable and to reinvent democracy. We recognize that development is about 98 percent relationships, and we stand ready to talk or meet at any time.



CHANG PARK: ERADICATING POVERTY

Common Cause has always championed a democracy that is more responsive to the public.

That is our mission. Yet we also care deeply about other issues. The ravages of poverty have long been a concern of our president Bob Edgar, and his friend Chang Park. Chang is a successful businessman whose family escaped North Korea when he was a child, and later came to the United States. He grew up poor in Korea and has since devoted himself to efforts to eradicate poverty.

Recently, Chang agreed to join Common Cause's National Governing Board and to make a generous donation to the organization's advocacy work. We know that public policies in a variety of areas are actively contributing to the deepening division of our society, economically and politically, between the haves and have-nots. We will be looking at the ways our reform issues and poverty connect—how features of our political system contribute to the problem of poverty in this country.

Go to Justice Talking NPR's blog, for more <http://communities.justicetalking.org/blogs>



LEAVING A LEGACY

You can help secure the future of Common Cause as Joanne McKray has done by naming the organization as a beneficiary of your Will or trust. If you would like to explore this further, or if you have already named Common Cause as beneficiary of your estate, please contact Vicki Manning, Director of Operations-Development, at vmanning@commoncause.org, or 212-691-6421 x 204. All inquiries are confidential and imply no obligation.

Joanne McKray, a charter member since 1970, named Common Cause a beneficiary of her estate because **“Common Cause works to make positive changes in our imperfect political system; for me supporting it provides a marvelous antidote to cynicism.”**

Power of Our Voices

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

Email your thoughts, a one-liner or your own op-ed, to grassroots@commoncause.org. Or, join our ongoing discussion on Common Blog www.commonblog.org



In addition to *Common Blog*, *Common Cause* staff and volunteers are all over the blogosphere. Check out *Political Fix in Wisconsin*: www.wisconsinpoliticalfix.org

And here's an excerpt from a piece by national staffer Josh Zaharoff on *Huffington Post*, just before the big ethics victory:

Josh Zaharoff: Dog Years And Dog Days For Ethics Reform—Politics On The Huffington Post

This week—now—the Democrats can take an important and much-needed step to address our broken ethics system by creating an independent Office of Congressional Ethics for Congress.

Or they can continue to pussyfoot around the idea, then attack it, and fall into the same trap that their Republican predecessors did: believing they can and should police themselves and trying to sell that to the public. We saw that, not more than 16 months ago. It. won't. work.

Get Rid of Nukes?

Jim McCartney was a Washington correspondent and columnist for more than 40 years, covering national politics and foreign affairs, with special concerns for nuclear arms control and the Middle East. His wife, Molly, is vice-chair of Common Cause Florida. This column originally appeared in the Bradenton Herald on March 2, 2008.

By James McCartney

A little more than a year ago four of the most prestigious experts on foreign policy in America became so concerned about the rapid spread of nuclear weapons technology that they decided to sound an alarm. Their fear: That in today's world terrorists might easily be able to produce a nuclear weapon.

Their stunning argument: That there is only one way to stop it—that the time has come for the world to get rid of all nuclear weapons. That's right. Zero. Get rid of them. Who were these radicals?

...to read the rest of Jim McCartney's column, go to www.commoncause.org/nonukes



Volunteer Profile Eric Neumann

The Washington Connection is our name for the volunteers who have been coming into the national office, some for many years, to help us in our work. We will be profiling some of them in the newsletter and on our website.

Eric Neumann is on the receiving end of hundreds email responses from CauseNet, our online activist network. He responds to some himself, others he farms out to staff, while also compiling a brief analysis of what people are writing to us about—good and bad comments, technical concerns, etc. He is retired after a career as a estate planning attorney and is also helping us with our new planned giving program (see more on p. 6).

Thinking Outside the Bomb Conference

Bob Edgar will be the keynote speaker on May 10, 2008 in Philadelphia at a conference on nuclear weapons and global health. The conference will “connect the dots” on the environment, nuclear weapons, and global action on health by bringing together experts, activists, advocates, and interested citizens, for a critically-important discussion for Earth's future. Bob's speech is titled “Confronting the Nuclear Peril to Heal the Planet-Setting a New Course.”

For more information, go to www.projectfornuclearawareness.org

NEW COMMON CAUSE CHAIRMAN

In February, former congressman Jim Leach joined Common Cause President Bob Edgar and more than 200 Common Cause staff, board members, friends and supporters for a welcoming reception at the Library of Congress. The gathering celebrated the new bipartisan leadership team of Bob and Jim, who was chosen as Common Cause's National Governing Board chairman in December 2007. Bob was chosen as president of Common Cause in May 2007.

Jim represented Iowa in Congress as a Republican for 30 years until 2006. He was known in Congress as an effective legislator willing to reach across the political aisle to build consensus. He was a champion of ethics and campaign finance reform.

Jim served as chairman of the House Banking and Financial Services Committee and was a leading advocate of legislation expanding support for AIDS treatment and prevention, international debt relief, banning Internet gambling and reforming the financial services industry. He is perhaps best known as the principal author of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley law, which is considered one of the seminal pieces of banking legislation of the 20th century.

Jim served in the United States Foreign Service and later as a delegate to the Geneva Disarmament Conference and the U.N. General Assembly. In

1973, Jim resigned his commission in protest of the Saturday Night Massacre when Richard Nixon fired his attorney general, Elliot Richardson, and the independent counsel investigating the Watergate break-in, Archibald Cox. Cox later became chairman of Common Cause and served in that position from 1980 to 1994.

Jim is currently the interim director of the Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He is on leave from Princeton University, where he is the John L. Weinberg Visiting Professor of Public and International Affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School.

Common Cause National Governing Board Chairman Jim Leach



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